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*from Mellen Chamberlain*

**JOHN ADAMS,**

THE

**Statesman of the American Revolution.**

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**ADDRESS**

BEFORE THE

**WEBSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY,**

AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING IN BOSTON, JAN. 18, 1884,

BY

HON. MELLEN CHAMBERLAIN.

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BOSTON :

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY,  
OFFICE, 83 EQUITABLE BUILDING,  
1884.





# JOHN ADAMS,

## THE STATESMAN OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

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### ENTRANCE UPON PUBLIC LIFE.

John Adams entered public life with the first session of the Continental Congress, which met at Philadelphia, 5 September, 1774, and remained in the service of the country almost uninterruptedly until the close of his administration, 4 March, 1801. Of this period, nine years were covered by the American Revolution, in which he took a leading part and held it with undiminished zeal and constancy until the Treaty of Peace in 1783. It is this part of his life of which I am to give some account.

His influence, during this period of national history, was mainly due to his ability; but he was fortunate in the time at which he intervened in public affairs, as also in the character of the colony from which he was a delegate to the Congress.

Of his great contemporaries, Franklin was not a member until the next spring, and after a little more than a year's service, he went abroad on his French mission; neither was Jefferson, who in later years, as a political rival, drew the great body of the people to his way of thinking on national subjects; nor until eight years had passed away was Hamilton, of marvellous genius for statesmanship. Washington entered the Congress with John Adams, and on his sugges-

tion a year later, was transferred from civil life to the head of the army.

Of the Congress of 1774, Edward Rutledge and John Jay were younger than John Adams ; but the greater part of the delegates were of an age which brings disqualifications for parliamentary leadership. John Adams was thirty-nine years old, and in the prime of his great powers. Peculiarities of temper, which in later years impaired his influence, at this time were a help rather than a hindrance. It must also be counted as his good fortune that he came from Massachusetts Bay ; for though that colony was regarded with distrust and dislike by the middle and southern colonies, there were facts in her history, as well as something in the character of her people, which gave potency to her voice in the national councils, and weight to John Adams as her leading representative.

Under such circumstances John Adams entered Congress, which he attended through the sessions of four years. During this period of revolution, which was also the period of necessary constitutional reconstruction, he rendered services such as no other statesman rendered, and more widely, more profoundly, and — unless present indications prove fallacious — more permanently impressed the political institutions of the country than any other man who has ever lived in it ; and by reason of these services he became entitled to rank as the pre-eminent statesman of the Revolution.

My object in this paper is to show by what endowments, by what acquisitions, and by what use of his powers, can be justly claimed for John Adams the first place among such statesmen as Samuel Adams, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, and even Benjamin Franklin.

There were no congressional reporters in those days. The members were pledged to secrecy. The journals are neither

full nor accurate, and even John Adams's own diary fails us at some of the most critical and interesting points; yet his services, in their results, are historically clear, and not difficult of estimation. It is more difficult, however, to estimate the character of the statesman who rendered these services; for though his purposes were single, and his methods simple and direct, his character was complex. In certain aspects it seems to belong to no known type of the English race, nor can it be described in a phrase.

#### THIS CHARACTERISTICS.

Here was a man born and bred in a narrow, provincial sphere, remote from the centres of liberal thought, untrav-elled, and separated by the ocean from those movements which so powerfully affected European society in the middle of the eighteenth century; and yet, in rare combination and large measure, he included in his character, and exhibited by his life and action, the best influences of the Reformation, in which those movements had their remote origin. Acknowledging the supremacy of conscience, and yielding implicit obedience to the claims of natural and revealed religion, he recognized its essential unity under all its varied forms of manifestation, and was free from the slightest trace of bigotry or sectarian narrowness. He believed in civil and religious liberty as inherent rights of the people, but under subjection, as are the forces of nature, to an intelligent and ever-active principle of law, which is Milton's idea of liberty. He was a provincial, with all the traditions of provincialism; and yet, undeniably, he was the foremost advocate and most efficient promoter of nationality. Before the colonies had declared themselves independent, and for the purpose of promoting that measure, he advocated the formation of State constitutions, and the severing of one tie which bound them

to the mother country ; and later, when the great Declaration had gone forth, he strove for a closer union and the semblance, at least, of a national government under the Articles of Confederation. Finally, when the war had closed and the terms of peace were under discussion, he, more than any other, secured to the nation the old colonial rights in the fisheries of Newfoundland, opened to navigation the mouth of the Mississippi when under doubtful jurisdiction, pushed the national boundaries from the Alleghanies to the great river, from the Ohio to the central line of the northern lakes, from the Kennebec to the St. Croix, and only yielding the Canadas to the necessities of peace.

It is an original, not an acquired, character we have to consider. His breadth of understanding and liberal views were not exhibited for the first time after he had left his native province for the wider theatre of national activity, nor when he had been in contact with speculative thought in Europe, but while yet a boy musing upon life and his possible relations to it.

John Adams possessed two faculties in a degree which distinguished him among his countrymen, and made him pre-eminently serviceable in a period of revolution, — the historic imagination which develops nationality from its germ, and clear intuitions of organic constitutional law. In these faculties he has never been surpassed by any American statesman, nor equalled save by him whose name needs no mention in this presence. There is evidence that from his youth he was accustomed to trace the growth and development of nationality in the great epochs of Saxon and English history and project it under new conditions in America ; and that from the earliest days of the Revolution, he saw in the determining force of race tendencies, united with free, independent government, the inevitable greatness of his

country. This gave unity and consistency to his whole public career, in which respect he stands nearly alone among public men of equal rank. It also gave him faith when others doubted, courage when they quailed in the face of danger, and constancy when they lost heart from disasters. In the gloomy days which succeeded the defeats at Brandywine and Germantown, when Washington and his army escaped destruction only by the unaccountable remissness of Howe, John Adams said, "These disasters will hurt us, but not ruin us." He had unshaken confidence in the course of free empire.<sup>1</sup>

If we now look at some of those moral characteristics which marked him as a statesman, we shall find certain race traits which he seems to have inherited immediately from his British ancestry, rather than by transmission through his colonial progenitors. He possessed the pluck, courage and bull-dog tenacity which we call English, and which all through their history has stood them in such stead in desperate civil and military encounters, often changing lost fields to fields of victory; and, on the other hand, there was no trace in his composition of the craft, cunning or selfishness which narrow circumstances and a hundred years of contest with a treacherous and skulking foe are supposed, justly or unjustly, to have engrafted on the New England character of his day.

There was no strategy in his nature. His path led straight to his object, and his movements in it were simple and direct, though not always free from ostentation and self-

<sup>1</sup> At a meeting of the American Academy in 1807, at the request of Dr. Abiel Holmes, John Adams wrote on a slip of paper, now in my possession, the following lines which he had seen inscribed in some forgotten place:—

"The eastern nations sink; their glory ends,  
And Empire rises where the sun descends."

assertion, not easily understood in so great a man. In his victories we perceive no special skill in plan or science of battle; but his eye was quick to detect the stress of the engagement, and there his honest blows fell fast and heavy. How clearly he saw the inevitableness of the issue, and how pluckily for more than a twelvemonth, in Congress, he fought the fight of the Declaration; and against what odds — for nothing is now more clear than this, that neither the Congress, nor the people as a whole, were quite ripe for it. He carried the measure by sheer force and persistence; and he was right. Yet it was one of those almost hopeless struggles in which victory forms an epoch in the history of human progress.

This directness of aim and impetuosity of movement were not the conventional methods, either in the legislation or the diplomacy of his day, and they subjected him to some animadversion from those who respected his honesty and ability. While on his Dutch mission, in 1781, to procure a recognition of our independence and to effect a loan, he shocked the old diplomatists by his memorial to their High Mightinesses and the Prince of Orange. This was issued against the advice, and even remonstrance, of our French allies.<sup>1</sup> But it led to ultimate success. I think it will be found that John Adams was always right in his well-considered judgments, and usually so in his measures; if any part of his conduct was open to criticism, it was his manner.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When copies of it reached America, Madison, writing to Pendleton, said, "I enclose a copy of Mr. Adams's memorial to the States General. I wish I could have informed you of its being lodged in the archives of their High Mightinesses, instead of presenting it to you in print." *Madison's Letters*, i. 54.

<sup>2</sup> The memorial above referred to was not promulgated without mature consideration of the whole case. Writing a year later to Francis Dana,

When the cause of independence and nationality demanded an orator, — not brilliant declaimers like Henry, Lee and Rutledge, but one who, with capacity for affairs, could bring powerful and intrepid advocacy into council and passionate appeals to patriotic sentiment, — such an orator was found in John Adams, the Colossus of debate.

These special gifts were made effective by a vigorous and comprehensive intellect and high courage. All his powers were trained, and every opportunity for improvement embraced, with an assiduity not common in America at that day.

John Adams at his best was always a statesman: as a politician he made a very indifferent figure. In his country's ends he always succeeded — always; and in his own, quite likely would always have failed, had he sought any that were merely personal. His much-derided administration, though conducted under great embarrassments, was useful to the country, and not without its period of national glory: and the measure which threw his cabinet into confusion was a bold stroke of statesmanship, conceived and persisted in without regard to party or personal interests. Ambitious, vain, egotistical, self-confident and jealous. — for he was all these, as no one knew better or has oftener told us than himself, — these qualities, on a superficial view, detract from the perfection of his character, and have cruelly interfered with his just fame. But they were mere exaggerations of harmless qualities. Beneath them all we can perceive a complete and well-rounded character, — large, powerful, active, and full of humanities, — with more of individuality

our then unaccredited minister to St. Petersburg, he said, "I see no objection against your attempt, as you propose, to find out the real disposition of the Empress, or her ministers. You cannot take any noisy measures like those I have taken here. The form of the government forbids it." Works, vii. 544.

than that of any other public man of his day. His *forte* was action. "I never shall shine," he said, "till some animating occasion calls forth all my powers." When side-tracked in the vice-presidency, or finally ditched at Braintree, the engine puffed, and snorted, and let off steam in a very unedifying manner; but on a clear course, no matter what the load or what the grades, it moved with the swiftness and *verve* of the lightning-train — and, it may be added, with something of its racket.

In respect to a man endowed with such rich and varied gifts, we have a rational curiosity to know something of the processes of education and special training by which they were so supplemented that in due time this native of an obscure provincial town came to be regarded as the ablest constitutional lawyer of his day and the consummate orator and statesman of the Revolution. Nor are we without the means.

#### PREPARATION FOR PUBLIC LIFE.

John Adams evidently was not unconscious of his powers, nor without ambition to make them servient to the interests of his country and his own honorable fame. In his youth he divined the coming empire of America, and formed himself, I think not without prescience, for a distinguished part in its affairs. His self-examination was critical and unsparing. He carefully considered his life-work, as well as his own powers. To what had been given him he added much by reading, reflection, and conversation with those more mature than himself. Of his college life we know but little; but on his graduation he entered upon a wide course of study with commendable diligence. His diary tells us that he made himself acquainted with the great poets of antiquity: with Homer, Virgil, Horace and Ovid. He knew Shaks-



peare, Milton, Baxter and Pope, and apparently understood and enjoyed them. Before the adoption of the law as his profession, and for the purpose of determining his choice, he read with attention the works of the great divines, the political and philosophical writers then in vogue, and the authoritative treatises in medical science. When fairly engaged in the study of the law, he pursued it with such success that before the age of thirty he became one of the best-equipped lawyers in America.

"The study and practice of law, I am sure, does not dissolve the obligations of morality or of religion," so he wrote at the age of twenty, as he was entering on his course of study; nor did he ever forget this conviction of his unhurt youth. His work was honest throughout, and he prepared himself honestly for it. He did not gauge his legal studies to the requirements of his native Braintree, where he began to practise, nor by those of the metropolis in which he was at one time settled. He aimed, he said, to distinguish himself among his fellow-students "by the study of the civil law in its native tongues." With Bracton, Britton, Fleta, Glanville, Coke and Lord Hale he became familiar, as also with Justinian and the great commentators on the civil law. To these must be added Montesquieu, Blackstone (then recently published), Voltaire's *Louis XIV.*, and, in fine, whatever was within his reach that could enlarge, enrich or strengthen his understanding for grasping the principles of law and constitutional government. Following the advice of Gridley, the Nestor of the bar, "to pursue the study of the law rather than the gain of it," he "labored to get distinct ideas of law, right, wrong, justice, equity; to search for them in his own mind, in Roman, Grecian, French, English treatises of natural, civil, common, statute law: to aim at an exact knowledge of the nature, end and means of

government; to compare the different forms of it with each other, and each of them with their effects on public and private happiness for the advancement of right; to assert and maintain liberty and virtue; to discourage and abolish tyranny and vice." With these added extracts from his diary we have the whole scheme of his life: "Let little objects be neglected and forgot, and great ones engross, arouse and exalt my soul." "I was born for business, for both activity and study. I have little appetite or relish for anything else. I must double and redouble my diligence." The recorded lives of great statesmen have sometimes made us familiar with the aspirations and purposes of their youth; but I recall few instances where these were fixed so high, so undeviatingly pursued, and so fully attained by achievements which have indelibly impressed themselves on the happy fortunes of a continent. These principles, made efficient by an intellect of extraordinary power, placed him foremost among the lawyers of his day; and as we read the history of the country, we learn without surprise that John Adams was also foremost among those who established the freedom and nationality of America, and laid the foundation of its government.<sup>1</sup> When he entered public life, in 1774, he was probably well qualified to conduct causes and argue questions of public law before any tribunal sitting at Westminster, and to represent with distinction any English constituency in the House of Commons.

<sup>1</sup> John Adams's legal erudition does not, as is so often the case among great lawyers, rest merely upon tradition. His dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, written at the age of twenty-nine, is still extant, and may be read with profit even in the light of later studies. It was erroneously attributed to Gridley, and pronounced by Hollis, in England, where it was more than once reprinted, to be "one of the very finest productions from North America."

Such was the man to whom came his hour ; and he made it an epoch in history.

John Adams was too conspicuous to be overlooked among the great men of the country, and the value of his services was acknowledged by his contemporaries ; but I think they were not estimated at their true value. We are in a far better position than they were to do him complete justice. We understand the Revolution itself, in its causes and its progress, much more fully than those who were actors in it. The century of the national existence just closed was to them the dark, uncertain future ; to us it has joined the historic past. In it we see events in their relations and proportions which to them appeared incomplete and sometimes unrelated.

#### CHARACTER OF THE REVOLUTION.

But I venture to think that we shall not reach these desirable results unless we unlearn some things we have been taught, and clear away some prejudices which have proved so fatal to successful historical research. We seem now far enough removed from the Revolution to study it historically, and not as partisans ; to be permitted to learn that then, as now, when people divide into parties, neither facts, nor right, nor conscience, are wholly on one side. Nor does it seem longer necessary to conceal those facts which do not stand for national honor, or to be compelled to guess them from ambiguous and often disingenuous apologies. It is hardly exaggeration, however, to say that we can more dispassionately discuss the causes of the late civil war, and lay bare the motives and conduct of the men and parties engaged in it on either side, than the motives and conduct of men and parties at the beginning of the Revolution, the intrigues in the Congress, or the convention at Saratoga in 1777.

The result of this state of things, growing out of undue solicitude for the reputation of individuals and a patriotic disposition to exalt the successful party, is that we have much history that is not truth, and profitable neither for reproof, instruction nor guidance.

John Adams's fame as a statesman grew out of his services during the American Revolution. In the endeavor to form a just estimate of those services, I have been led to consider that event in its inception, progress and results, and to discover, if possible, the exact relations of John Adams to it.

In the prosecution of this purpose I have observed some facts which do not appear to me to be sufficiently emphasized, to say the least, in the histories of that period; and I have reached some conclusions which require a fuller statement of the grounds on which they rest than is ordinarily found in an address of this description.

It seems to me that we shall fail to appreciate the true character of the Revolution if we restrict its entirety to the events which transpired between the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Peace of 1783; for, thus limited, I am unable to find adequate causes in those events when regarded in their necessary political sequence, or when referred in historical parallelism to other movements of society which have resulted in the disruption of governments. The causes of revolution are usually remote from the event. No matter on what soil they are planted, the seeds of a new order of government germinate slowly, and only children's children are permitted to repose beneath its branches. For the history of the Revolution we must go back to the planting of the seeds. John Adams is authority for this view of the subject. "The principles and feelings which contributed to produce the Revolution ought to be traced back for two hundred years, and sought in the history of the country from the first plantations

in America." Seldom, if ever, are revolutions the spontaneous action of an entire community. Their interests may be the same, they may suffer from a common grievance, but people will not think alike. Divergences of opinions are sure to arise, and out of these parties are formed. A contest ensues with vicissitudes of fortune, but ultimately terminating in accordance with the movement of society out of which it springs. The American Revolution was no exception to this general rule, though one might infer otherwise from much which passes for history.

To understand the services which John Adams rendered to the country in the Revolution, it is essential to understand the attitude of the parties which brought it on, and, with great exactness, the questions which divided them in their inception, progress and urgency, at the time when he engaged in public affairs; and especially so in his case, since, to a profound knowledge of these questions, and the formative influence of this knowledge on his mind and character, was due in no small degree his success in giving direction and happy issue to the movement.

The commonly received notion is, that the passage of the Stamp Act so clearly contravened the rights of the colonists as British subjects, that they with one accord rose in resistance, and after eight years of strife, finally achieved their independence. I venture to think that this is the apparent, rather than the real, state of the case. I think that those who accept it fail to perceive the true nature of this demonstration, and wholly overlook the vital elements of genuine revolution which existed in the antecedent history of the two colonies whose hearts were earliest engaged in the cause, — Virginia and Massachusetts, — and made revolution possible; and that of these causes, perhaps the prime cause, without which the Revolution would never have begun when it did and

where it did, was ecclesiastical rather than political, beginning with the settlement of the colony of Massachusetts Bay, and operating with unbroken succession and efficiency down to the commencement of hostilities.

It also overlooks the origin and continuity of that civil contest which began in Massachusetts with the revocation of the first charter in 1684, between the friends of the royal government and the champions of popular rights, in which parties arrayed themselves under the respective and successive lead of Randolph and Danforth, Dudley and Cooke, Burnett and Wells, on issues as sharply defined, involving the same general principles, and as hotly contested, as those which divided Bernard and Hutchinson from James Otis and Samuel Adams.

Another misconception which belittles the contest and detracts from the merit of the patriotic party, is that which regards the Tories as a mere handful of malignants, composed mainly of commercial adventurers and government officials, having no stake in the community, together with a few old families which, for personal aggrandizement, set themselves in opposition to the principles and measures of the patriots, and sought to compass the subjugation and ruin of the country in which they were born, and in which their dearest interests centred.

The only remaining matter to which I shall allude, relates to the grounds on which the patriotic party opposed the parliamentary claim of right to tax the colonists.

In reading the histories of those times, one is likely to receive the impression that the outburst of popular indignation which pervaded the colonies on the news of the passage of the Stamp Act would not have occurred had the colonists been represented in Parliament; but there is no foundation for this impression. Their main objection was com-

mercial, and not political. It was to the tax, not to non-representation ; still less to any merely theoretical claim of parliamentary supremacy, as is evident from the quiet which followed the repeal of the act, though accompanied by the express declaration of the right to tax the colonists. And we are to regard the resolutions of the Congress of 1765, as well as those of the provincial assemblies in the early stages of the controversy, and perhaps as late as 1775, in the nature of protests, like the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of a later day, designed, of course, to influence parliamentary legislation, but not as preliminaries of forcible resistance.

But there came a time — earlier in Massachusetts than elsewhere, for reasons to be given hereafter — when all this was changed ; when the colonists came to understand that there were colonial constitutions as well as a British constitution, and that both were subject to like laws of growth and development ; that by the operation of these laws in the direction of natural rights, their own constitutions had come to be the basis and measure of their rights and immunities ; that in all cases, especially in internal affairs, where the imperial and colonial constitutional maxims conflicted, the latter were the fundamental rule of right and action ; and finally, that if the validity of this construction involved a reference to the *ultima ratio*, it would only be one more instance, of which English history is full, of that mode of settling constitutional questions. When the colonists came to this ground, they had a good fighting position, not before. Here John Adams stood — stood nearly alone ; altogether alone in the clearness with which he saw the strength of this position, and in the courage and pertinacity with which he maintained it. To this clear constitutional ground he first led his own colony, and finally the representatives of the thirteen colonies in Congress assembled, in a declaration of their rights in 1774,

and of their independence in 1776. This was his greatest public service; and it was the greatest feat of statesmanship during the revolutionary period. He had able co-adjutors, but to him, more than to any other, the honor is due. This ground of rights under colonial constitution once taken, the strife was no longer rebellion, but maintenance of constitutional rights. "We are not exciting a rebellion," exclaimed John Adams. "Opposition, nay, open, avowed resistance by arms, against usurpation and lawless violence, is not rebellion by the law of God or the land." The colonists were no longer traitors, but patriots; and those who undertook to force their position were justly deemed public enemies. Final success was no longer doubtful. The cause had aligned itself to the great movement of society, which began with the Reformation, in the direction of nationality, and in its support had secured the resources of a continent.

#### MASSACHUSETTS IN THE REVOLUTION.

These positions must now be referred to their historic basis. It was by no accident that the Revolution broke out in Massachusetts Bay. It could have happened, at that time, nowhere else upon the continent. Nowhere else had a succession of causes, civil and religious, operative through a hundred years, prepared the way for it. Hither the royal troops had been sent, because here they were needed to maintain the royal government: and to these troops the first armed resistance in which blood was shed, was on the field of Lexington, 19 April, 1775.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this point it is scarcely necessary to quote authorities. One will suffice. "In all the late American disturbances, and in every attempt against the authority of the British Parliament, the people of Massachusetts Bay have taken the lead. Every new move towards independence has been theirs; and in every fresh mode of resistance against the law,



Starting, then, from that place and hour, and running back on the line of colonial history in search of adequate causes not connected with antecedent causes, I find my progress arrested and my historic sense of cause and effect satisfied only by the events and motives which led to the settlement of the Bay in 1630. These motives were two : religious and civil liberty. And the greatest of these was religious liberty. It was also the most efficient. And I find that these motives, regarded as causes, continued to exist and operate in clear religious and political sequence, with only insignificant interruptions, and with scarcely impaired vitality, to the treaty of peace in that year of God of which the last was the happy centennial ; and that the events which occurred between 1765 and 1783, though dramatically complete in themselves, yet historically are only the closing act of a drama which opened in 1630 with the coming of Winthrop and his Puritans.

#### ECCLESIASTICISM A CAUSE OF THE REVOLUTION.

And thus the American Revolution began in the colony of Massachusetts Bay, and in its vital and most potent force was religious rather than political. This character of the Revolution was impressed upon it by the circumstances which led to the Puritan hegira from England in 1630 ; and those circumstances, only changed in form, but remaining the same in their essential character, continued to exist until the

they have first set the example, and then issued out admonitory letters to the other colonies to follow it." Mauduit's *Short View of the History of the New England Colonies*, 5. An address to the House, 7 February, 1775, and before the events at Lexington, proposed by the minister, and carried after great debate, declared that a rebellion already existed in Massachusetts, countenanced and fomented by unlawful combinations in the other Colonies. Hildreth, *Hist. U.S.* iii. 61.

events at Lexington in 1775 notified the Bishop of London, as well as the King of England, that the descendants of the Puritans had referred both the polemics of the hierarchy and the casuistry of parliamentary supremacy to the decision of war. The motive which led to the Puritan emigration was religious rather than civil. It was from the crozier rather than the sceptre — from Laud and the High Commission rather than Charles the First — that the Puritans fled.<sup>1</sup>

They came hither to escape the hierarchy of the Church of England and to set up one of their own. And it was in defence of this domestic hierarchy — though civil and religious liberty were indissolubly connected in their minds — that the clergy of New England, alone of all the professional or propertied classes, arrayed themselves on the popular side.

In the middle and southern colonies, as well as in New England, there had been political contests with the representatives of the Crown. All the colonies were dissatisfied with the Navigation Laws and Acts of Trade, and the exercise of the royal prerogatives; but out of New England, the colonists, who were mainly of the Church of England, — certainly not Puritans, — became quiet as the enforcement of these laws was relaxed or evaded. But in New England, and especially in Massachusetts, disquietude prevailed unceasingly, and the Revolutionary cause, when no other disturbing

<sup>1</sup> "Independence of English Church and State was the fundamental principle of the first colonization, has been its general principle for two hundred years, and now, I hope, is past dispute. Who, then, was the author, inventor, discoverer, of independence? The only true answer must be, the first emigrants. When we say that Otis, Adams, Mayhew, Henry, Lee, Jefferson, &c., were authors of independence, we ought to say they were only awakeners and revivers of the original fundamental principle of colonization." *John Adams's Works*, x. 359. "It is certain that civil dominion was but the secondary motive, religious the primary, with our ancestors in coming hither and settling this land." *President Stiles, American Pulpit*, xxx.

element was apparent, fluctuated with the efforts of the Bishop of London to establish Episcopacy in New England. For the accomplishment of this end there was the ever present, always active motive of sectarian zeal for the propagation of religious faith, and still more of ecclesiastical government. To this was added a special reason in the dissatisfaction of the Church-of-England people in Massachusetts, to whom Puritanic ways were displeasing. This class, consisting in the early days chiefly of crown officials and commercial sojourners, was not large, but increasing sufficiently so as to excite the commiseration of the Bishop of London, as sheep without a shepherd, and wandering in unconsecrated pastures. His efforts for their relief kept the Puritans in hot water for more than seventy years, and gave rise to a mutual dislike which became hereditary. In their resistance to Episcopacy the Massachusetts people were regarded in England as bigoted religionists and refractory subjects. And so were they by the people of the colonies out of New England; a fact never to be lost sight of in tracing the progress of the Revolution. For the middle and southern colonies had been settled or become possessed by people in sympathy with the Church of England, or at least having no special cause of hostility to it, — as was the case with the Puritans, — under whose ministrations they were contented, with loyalty to the King, to worship God after the manner of their fathers.

To this grateful privilege of ecclesiastical relationship was added a pecuniary advantage, so long as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts liberally expended the contributions of the piously disposed churchmen of the mother country in establishing parishes, erecting church edifices, and paying the salaries of missionaries in colonial territory. To this they saw no more objections than occur to the minds of our frontier settlers to the benevolent opera-

tions of the Home Missionary Society. But to the Puritans of Massachusetts, scattering the seeds of Episcopacy was sowing tares by the Evil One. To escape from soul-destroying conformity, their fathers had fled their pleasant homes in Lincolnshire, and set up their altars in a bleak and sterile wilderness. They had come hither, not so much to erect a state as a church; and if, after a time, the two became one, that one was the church-state, not the state-church, between which there is an immense difference. They set it up for themselves, not for others. To that liberality of toleration they made no pretension, as is so often forgotten. To their new home came unwelcome intruders; and with them came trouble. I am now to trace this history.<sup>1</sup> Land, at the head

<sup>1</sup> Some years since, I noticed facts in ecclesiastical history apparently of more importance in the Revolutionary struggle than had been accorded to them by historians; and later, special study has confirmed this impression. This reticence on the part of those who wrote early on the war of the Revolution had been observed by Boucher, the Tory clergyman of Virginia, and by him attributed to some discreditable motive, such as a disposition to conceal the Puritan narrowness which would exclude Episcopalians from the privileges of church worship after their form. *View of the Causes of the Revolution*, 148. Bancroft and Hildreth have treated the subject as fully, perhaps, as the necessary regard to proportions in a general history would permit; but neither, so as to apprise the reader how early and how continuously, nor, I think, how efficiently, ecclesiasticism operated as a cause of the Revolution. Hildreth, who treats the subject more fully and more directly than Bancroft, says, "The Congregational ministers of New England, an intelligent and very influential body, headed at this period by Chauncy and Cooper, of Boston, cherished a traditionary sentiment of opposition to British control. — a sentiment strengthened, of late years, by the attempts of the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to build up Episcopacy in New England by supporting there some thirty Episcopal missionaries. An unseasonable revival of the scheme for a bishop in the colonies had recently excited a bitter controversy, in which, since Mayhew's death, Chauncy had come forward as the Congregational champion; a controversy which could

of the High Commission, began the assault on the expatriated Puritans in 1634, but the civil wars prevented further efforts to set up Episcopacy until the Restoration. The contention, however, did not cease when Presbyterianism became the State religion under the Commonwealth, since the adherents of that ecclesiastical polity sought to introduce it into Massachusetts. This the Puritans resisted as strenuously as they had resisted prelacy. They had established independent

only tend to confirm the Congregational body in hostility to the extension of English influence." *Hist. U.S.* iii. 55.

There is a very interesting letter written by John Adams to Dr. Morse in 1815, the whole of which should be read by those who would know the views of one most competent to speak on this subject. The following extract will serve to show some foundation at least for the view I have taken in the text: and I may add, had I met with it earlier in my reading, it would have saved me much research, and the reader some pages of my own:—

"Where is the man to be found at this day, when we see Methodistical bishops, bishops of the Church of England, and bishops, archbishops and Jesuits of the Church of Rome, with indifference, who will believe that the apprehension of Episcopacy contributed fifty years ago, as much as any other cause, to arouse the attention, not only of the inquiring mind, but of the common people, and urge them to close thinking on the constitutional authority of Parliament over the Colonies? This, nevertheless, was a fact as certain as any in the history of North America. The objection was not merely to the office of a bishop, though even that was dreaded, but to the authority of Parliament, on which it must be founded. . . . If Parliament can erect dioceses and appoint bishops, they may introduce the whole hierarchy, establish tithes, forbid marriages and funerals, establish religions, forbid dissenters." *Works*, x. 185.

At an earlier date he had said, "It is true that the people of this country in general, and of this province in special, have an hereditary apprehension of, and aversion to, lordships, temporal and spiritual. Their ancestors fled to this wilderness to avoid them,—they suffered sufficiently under them in England. And there are few of the present generation who have not been warned of the danger of them by their fathers and grandfathers, and enjoined to oppose them. *Novanglus*, February 13, 1775.

churches, and determined they should remain such. They agreed with John Milton, —

New Presbyterian is but Old Priest writ large.

But the Restoration of Charles II. renewed the strife under its old form — resistance to Anglicanism. For, as soon as the domestic affairs of the realm would permit, royal commissioners were sent over to inquire into the reports from Massachusetts Bay, "that his subjects in those parts did not submit to his government, but looked upon themselves as independent upon him and his laws;" and with instructions "to take care that such orders were established there that the Act of Navigation should be punctually observed;" and to send home a detailed report of the frame and constitution of the local government in *Church and State*.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of these directions was clear to the colonists when they found their old enemy, the Church-of-England Samuel Maverick, among the commissioners. This unfriendly scrutiny into their ecclesiastical and civil affairs was met by the colonists with infinite skill and patience, if not with entire candor; for nobody knew better than themselves that they had claimed and exercised substantial sovereignty in Church and State, and that they were determined to yield it only in the direst extremity. In that extremity they soon found themselves; but neither they, nor their descendants, ceased to resist the introduction of prelacy, until armed resistance at the Revolution involved the thirteen colonies in a strife which had its origin in a question of local polemics.

In 1684 the enemies of the Puritan Church overthrew the old charter under which the colonists had been allowed to manage civil and ecclesiastical affairs in a very free and independent way. What of disaster to civil and religious lib-

<sup>1</sup> Palfrey, Hist. ii. 584.

erty, as the Puritans understood these terms, this change imported, soon became evident. It overthrew their constitution of government; it confiscated the title to their lands and all improvements on them, and it imperilled their cherished form of church government. The significance of the loss of their charter, in its influence upon the hundred years of controversy which ensued, will not be fully appreciated, unless we keep in mind that ecclesiastical, as well as civil, causes led to that result. It was not merely that the colonists had disobeyed the Navigation laws, coined money, and performed other acts of civil sovereignty, that Charles's commissioners were sent on their errand of inquiry. In fact, the formation of the commission was instigated in the colony itself by those whose chief grievance was, that they had suffered under the strictness of the Puritan hierarchy, in not being permitted those consolations to be found by them only in the bosom of the Anglican Church. "They discountenance the Church of England," was the constant complaint to the Privy Council by Randolph, the memory of whose malign influence, as the evil genius of New England, still survives in tradition as well as in recorded history.

The new order of things under the presidency of Dudley began 25 May, 1686, and the day following the Rev. Mr. Ratcliffe, who had been sent over by the Bishop of London to institute Episcopal worship, waited upon the Council. Mason and Randolph, members of that body, proposed that he should be allowed one of the three Puritan meeting-houses to preach in; and in June the first Anglican church in New England was organized at Boston. The next year the Old South meeting-house was virtually seized by Andros, who had succeeded Dudley, and used for the Church of England service. "If," says Palfrey, "the demand had been for the use of the building for a mass, or for a

carriage-house for Juggernaut, it could scarcely have been to the generality of people more offensive.”<sup>1</sup> But the Revolution of 1689, of which the detestation of Episcopacy was one of the chief causes, swept away Andros and his government, and the Puritan Zion had comparative peace until 1699, when the Earl of Bellomont, the first Church-of-England governor under the new charter, arrived. He was attached to the communion of his church, which he attempted to revive in Boston. In this he was encouraged by the Bishop of London, the diocesan for America, and the Lords of Trade, who interested themselves to obtain for the colonists the advantages of ecclesiastical supervision.<sup>2</sup> And from this time down to the breaking out of the war, Bishops Tenison, Sherlock and Secker were successively active in promoting the establishment of an Anglican hierarchy, with resident bishops, in America; and in 1761, there were in New England thirty missionaries who had been sent over by the Propagation Society.

For nearly a hundred years preceding the Revolution, these efforts to establish Episcopacy in Massachusetts were causes of anxiety and alarm. On the anniversary of the death of Charles the First, January 30, 1750, twenty-five years before the war broke out, Dr. Jonathan Mayhew, of Boston, preached a discourse which became famous on both

<sup>1</sup> What also gave great offence, the Quakers and Dissenters were encouraged by the Governor to refuse payment of the taxes levied by the towns for the support of the ministers. The celebrating of marriages, no longer exercised by the magistrates, as had been the case under the old charter, was confined to Episcopal clergymen, of whom there was but one in the province. It was necessary to come to Boston in order to be married. Hildreth, *Hist. U.S.* ii. 110, 111.

<sup>2</sup> The zeal of William's colonial governors on behalf of the Church of England originated quite as much in political as in religious motives. Community of religions, it was thought, would be a security for political obedience. *Ib.* 214.



sides of the Atlantic, in which he attacked the doctrines of the divine right of kings, passive obedience, and the exclusive claims of the Episcopal hierarchy. A sentence from the preface to the published sermon will indicate its character and temper: "People have no security against being unmercifully priest-ridden but by keeping all imperious bishops, and other clergymen who love to lord it over God's heritage, from getting their feet into the stirrup at all." It breathes an intense spirit of religious and civil liberty, and did much to intensify the colonial hatred of the threatened Episcopal hierarchy. In this it expressed — perhaps inspired — the sentiments of Samuel Adams, and was one of the most powerful influences which kept alive the spirit of revolution, and finally prepared the minds of the Massachusetts colonists for open resistance. The following extracts will show how continuous was the expressed hostility to Episcopacy, — a feeling not confined to the ignorant, illiberal crowd, but shared by the most enlightened of the colonists: —

Samuel Adams, as the voice of the House of Representatives, presumably expressing the sentiments of the people, in a letter to their agent in London, in 1768, said, "The establishment of a Protestant Episcopate in America is also very zealously contended for; and it is very alarming to a people whose fathers, from the hardships they suffered under such an establishment, were obliged to fly their native country into a wilderness. . . . We hope in God such an establishment will never take place in America, and we desire you would strenuously oppose it. The revenue raised in America, for aught we can tell, may be as constitutionally applied towards the support of prelacy as of soldiers and pensioners."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wells's Life of Sam. Adams, i. 157.

Dr. Andrew Eliot, the enlightened clergyman who declined the presidency of Harvard College, in one of a series of letters chiefly on this subject, written between 1768 and 1771, addressed to Thomas Hollis, in England, said, "The people of New England are greatly alarmed; the arrival of a bishop would raise them as much as any one thing."<sup>1</sup>

As late as 1772, the Boston Committee of Correspondence appointed to state the rights of the colonists, in their report made in Faneuil Hall, among other things declared, "that various attempts have been made, and are now made, to establish an American Episcopate;" though "no power on earth can justly give temporal or spiritual jurisdiction within this province except the General Court."<sup>2</sup>

It may be difficult for us who live under the mild and beneficent influence of Episcopacy to understand the alarm which its proposed introduction occasioned to the most liberal minds among our New England ancestors during the century which immediately preceded the Revolution. Making all due allowances for the exaggerated apprehensions of the common people, I mean those who were ready to mob a bishop, as well as for the personal pecuniary interest which the clergy of the ruling order had in resisting encroachments upon *their* establishment, there was, at that time, a real danger to civil liberty, as it existed under democratic forms, in the attitude and claims of the Anglican hierarchy. Nor was New England alone in this state of alarm. There were many in Old England, some high in the Church itself<sup>3</sup>, who

<sup>1</sup> Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll. xxxiv. 492. Tudor's Life of Otis, 136.

<sup>2</sup> Thornton's Amer. Pulpit, 192; and see Adams's Works, ix. 287. 288.

<sup>3</sup> English Dissenters, with some churchmen, were in full accord with their American brethren on this subject. Archdeacon Blackburne says, "They knew the hardships of those legal disabilities under which they themselves lay at home. They had good reason to believe that the influence of the established hierarchy contributed to continue this grievance. Their

deprecatcd the reactionary tendency towards the exercise of the temporal powers. In both countries the question was the same at the period of our Revolution, and had been for a hundred and fifty years. During this period the Puritans in Old England who abided the result of the contest on their native soil, and their descendants, finally threw off the excess of prelatical domination, with its included doctrines of the divine right and passive obedience, and relegated Episcopacy, in all but the name, to the exercise of its spiritual functions, restrained the power of the nobles, extinguished that of the sovereign, and raised the people, through the commons, to their true place in the body politic. To accomplish this, cost one king his head, another his crown, and the people themselves untold treasures of blood and money.

Some of the Puritans sought quiet by flight into the New England wilderness ; but in vain. They found no exemption in that war. The spirit of ecclesiastical domination followed them, and for a century and a half they strenuously resisted the re-imposition of that system which their brethren at home were endeavoring to throw off. The contest was essentially the same on both sides of the Atlantic, and continued down to the Revolution, of which it was one of the principal causes. During this long contest, names often changed, and the evils experienced on one side of the water, and feared on the other, were mitigated by the lapse of time and the general progress of the age. But the principle contended for, civil and religious liberty, remained to the end.

brethren in America were as yet free from it, and if bishops were let in among them, and particularly under the notion of presiding in established churches, there was the highest probability they would take their precedents of government and discipline from the establishment in the mother country, and would probably never be at rest till they had established it on the basis of an exclusive test. They knew their American brethren thought on this subject just as they themselves did." Works, ii. 73.

The claim of the high churchmen was, "that every country acts naturally and prudently in making the ecclesiastical polity conformable to its civil government." This was a proposition which neither the early nor the later Puritans would care to dispute, since they acted upon it themselves. Their contention was that, their civil government being essentially democratic, their ecclesiastical system should be the same. They opposed the engrafting of the prelatical system, which was monarchical, upon their system, which was republican, well knowing the tendency of ecclesiasticism to draw to itself the civil government. They saw Monarchy and Episcopacy as correlated facts, and in resisting the latter, they resisted the former. Such was their view of the case; nor were the facts against them.

The Church of England, so far as it had a civil establishment, was the creature of Parliament. It looked up to the king as its head, and to the Parliament as its lawgiver. Its creed and book of prayer were established by statute. It could not reform its own abuses. Through Parliament, the laity amended and regulated the Church. The election of the bishops by the clergy was only nominal. The purity of spiritual influence was tarnished by this strict subordination to the temporal power.<sup>1</sup> This was the system. Its administration was still more objectionable to the Puritans. Its establishment in New England meant a return to that state of ecclesiastical and civil affairs from which they had suffered so much, and from which they fled to the privations and sufferings of an inhospitable wilderness.<sup>2</sup> So at least they

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, Hist., ed. 1883, iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> The Episcopate would legitimately bring in the whole system of canon ecclesiastical courts, in contravention of the constitutional judicial powers of the provincial courts; nor would the colonists listen to the suggestion that the bishop's power would be merely spiritual, for they feared that, as Mayhew expressed it, if the bishop's foot was once in the stirrup the people would be effectually priest-ridden.

regarded it, and the efforts of the Anglican hierarchy down to the Revolution never permitted this feeling to subside. Under the old charter, the churches, with the consent of the General Court, called their synods, which laid down or modified their platform of religious faith and ecclesiastical government according to the convictions of a body of professed christians. But when the Congregational ministers of Massachusetts, as late as 1725, memorialized the General Court for permission to hold a synod, the Bishop of London, instigated by the Anglican clergy of Boston, brought the matter to the attention of the home government; and Yorke, afterwards Lord Hardwicke, then Attorney General, and the Solicitor General, gave as their official opinion: 1. That synods cannot lawfully be held without the royal license. 2. That an application to the provincial legislature was a contempt of the sovereign; and, 3. That if notice of this should find them (the synod) in session, the Lieutenant Governor should "signify to them . . . that they do forbear to meet any more;" and, if they persevere, "that the principal actors therein be prosecuted by information for misdemeanors."<sup>1</sup> This incident of colonial history shows that the objection to Anglicanism was not merely theoretical, for it invaded the constitution of the civil government. Its adherents were generally on the side of prerogative; and John Adams has recorded in his diary, in 1765, that "the Church people are, many of them, favorers of the Stamp Act at present."<sup>2</sup>

However we of the present generation may choose to regard the apprehensions of the Massachusetts Puritans and their descendants late into the last century, in respect to the designs of the Anglican hierarchy, this fact — and it is the

<sup>1</sup> Palfrey, iv. 454.

<sup>2</sup> Works, ii. 168, 348.

only fact of present interest — remains clear: that the series of events — and it is their continuity which should be particularly noticed — which stand to the Revolution in the relation of operative sequence, if not primarily of cause and effect, began in Massachusetts Bay with the coming of the Puritans; and that these events were religious as well as civil, unless the true expression would be, — religious rather than civil.

#### ECCLESIASTICISM IN VIRGINIA.

Nor was the ecclesiastical element as a cause of the Revolution restricted to Massachusetts. It entered into the controversy — was one of the causes of the Revolution — in Virginia, as well as in Massachusetts: but with a difference. The Puritans fled to Massachusetts because they hated Anglicanism: the cavaliers fled to Virginia because they hated Puritanism. The Puritan hostility to Anglicanism was based upon the profoundest religious conviction. It was transmitted to their children, and ever associated with the trials and sufferings of the first generation. It was kept alive by the unintermitting efforts of the English hierarchy to establish its ecclesiastical system in the Puritan colonies. Whatever may have been the feelings of the Virginia Churchmen in the days of the Revolution towards the Congregationalists of New England, owing to circumstances which will be presently narrated, they came together on the ground of hostility to Anglicanism, which, as has already been said, was a cause of the Revolution.

It was one cause:<sup>1</sup> no one claims that it was the sole cause.

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Boucher, writing from the extreme High Church view, puts this matter in an interesting light. "That the American opposition to Episcopacy was at all connected with that still more serious one so soon afterwards set up against civil government, was not indeed generally apparent *at the time* [in Virginia]; but it is now [1797] indisputable, as it

And it has been dwelt upon at some length, not only because it seems to have failed of due recognition in the historical accounts of that event, but also since a clear understanding of the matter is essential to a correct view of the position of Samuel Adams, the Puritan, one of the prime movers of the Revolution, as well as somewhat by way of contrast, of John Adams, its great statesman.<sup>1</sup>

The union between Massachusetts and Virginia in the Revolution has been alluded to; a union which, considering the respective origin and history of the two colonies, was incongruous, and almost grotesque; a union of the descendants of the fanatical Puritans and of the High Church loyal-

also is that the former contributed not a little to render the latter successful. As therefore this controversy was clearly one great cause that led to the Revolution, the view of it here given, it is hoped, will not be deemed wholly uninteresting." View, 150.

<sup>1</sup> The difference was this: Samuel Adams was a Puritan and Calvinist of the strictest sect. John Adams strenuously dissented from Calvinism, but firmly adhered to the doctrines of the Puritans concerning civil and religious liberty, and regarded with equal aversion the designs of the Anglican hierarchy. His dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, already alluded to, was a "Tract for the Times." It was printed in the year of the Stamp Act, 1765, when he was twenty-nine years old, and shows how inseparably ecclesiastical and political tyranny were associated in his mind as things of present dread, and also how thoroughly he had studied the questions on which in later years he exercised a commanding influence. He was fully in accord with Mayhew, Chauncy, Eliot and Samuel Adams in their hostility to the Anglican pretensions and endeavors to establish an Episcopate in the colonies. At the age of twenty, he asked, "Where do we find a precept in the Gospel requiring ecclesiastical synods, convocations, councils, decrees, creeds, confessions, oaths, subscriptions, and whole cart-loads of other trumpery that we find religion encumbered with in these days?" Works, ii. 5, 6. "Honesty, sincerity and openness I esteem essential marks of a good mind. I am, therefore, of opinion that men ought (after they have examined with unbiased judgments every system of religion, and chosen one system on their own authority, for themselves) to avow their opinions and defend them with boldness." Works, ii. 8.

ists, of the roundhead and of the cavalier. And yet these two colonies entered the contest earlier than any other,—Virginia the earlier, if it is regarded as merely civil,—and were mutually helpful and steadfast to the end. This phenomenal embrace requires explanation to the bystanders, from both parties.

The religion of Virginia was Anglican, and it was the established religion, with the canons, the liturgy and the catechism. The anniversary of the execution of Charles I. was a legal fast, and the restoration of Charles II. was a holiday. Besides their glebes and parsonages, a maintenance was secured to the parish ministers in valuable and current commodities of the country; and the New England laws against Quakers, says Hildreth, to whom I am indebted for this paragraph, were in full force.<sup>1</sup>

Devotion to the Church was a test of devotion to the king as its head and defender, and non-conformity was identified with republicanism and disloyalty.<sup>2</sup>

The following extract will serve not only to show the views of a Virginia Anglican, but it also throws much light upon the attitude of the New England congregationalists in relation to the introduction of Episcopacy: "The constitution of the Church of England is approved, confirmed and adopted by our laws, and interwoven with them. No other form of church government than that of the Church of England would be compatible with the form of our civil government. No other colony has retained so large a portion of the monarchical part of the British Constitution as Virginia; and between that attachment to monarchy and the government of the Church of England there is a strong connexion."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hist. i. 512.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson's Church and State, 34, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Boucher's View, 103.



The aspect in which the New Englanders appeared to the people of Virginia, and the obstacles to be surmounted in securing their cordial co-operation in the Revolution, may be seen in the same author: "That a people [Virginians] in full possession and enjoyment of all the peace and all the security which the best government in the world can give, should, at the instigation of another people [New Englanders], for whom they entertained an hereditary national distaste, confirmed by their own personal dislike, suddenly and unprovoked, and in contradiction to all the opinions they had heretofore professed to hold on the subject of government, rush into a civil war against a nation they loved . . . is one of those instances of inconsistency in human conduct which are often met with in real life, but which, set down in a book, seem marvellous, romantic and incredible. This, however, is an unexaggerated description of the general temper of mind which prevailed in the people of Virginia and Maryland towards those of New England."<sup>1</sup>

One more extract from the same writer will show the approach of Virginia and Massachusetts to the same ground: "When it is recollected that till now [1771] the opposition to an American Episcopate has been confined chiefly to the demagogues and independents of the New England provinces, but that it is now espoused with much warmth by the people of Virginia, it requires no great depth of political sagacity to see what the motives and views of the former have been, or what will be the consequences of the defection of the latter."<sup>2</sup>

It is now desirable to understand by what circumstances

<sup>1</sup> Boucher, xxxiv. This writer suggests in a note that the New Englanders endeavored to overcome these prejudices by pitching on Mr. Randolph, a Virginian, to be the first president of Congress, and on Mr. Washington, who was also a Virginian, to command the American army.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 103.

two provinces so dissimilar in their form of government, religion, social life, and general habits of thought, were brought together on the common ground of hostility to Episcopacy, which was so considerable a cause of the Revolution.

There were Puritans in Virginia, though but a handful, who, in the early days of the colony, had established relations with their New England brethren. Commercial relations also existed between these colonies, and some points in their civil history were not dissimilar. Both had suffered from the repeal of their charters, and both had lived in chronic dissatisfaction with the mother country; and if, at any time and for any cause, the Revolution had failed in Massachusetts, it would not have been hopeless until it had also failed in Virginia. But on these two colonies it rested. The constitution of Virginia, when compared with that of Massachusetts, was monarchical, and, as has been said, her religion was Anglican, and it was the established religion.

#### ECCLESIASTICISM IN VIRGINIA POLITICS.

In 1740 there was not, so far as is known, a single Dissenting congregation in Virginia; but in 1770, there were eleven Dissenting ministers regularly settled, who had each from two to four congregations under his care.<sup>1</sup>

At the Revolution, and for thirty years before, Virginia had been making strenuous efforts to throw off the Anglican system, so far, at least, as related to its temporal powers; and during the same period, as always, Massachusetts was as strenuously resisting its imposition. In this respect they were alike. But the resemblance ends here. In the latter colony, it was essentially a question of civil and religious

<sup>1</sup> Boucher, 100.

liberty ; in the former, it was essentially a question of taxation.

Every one is familiar with the case between the clergy of the Established Church in Virginia and the planters, known as the "Parsons' Case," which gave first occasion to Patrick Henry for the display of his unrivalled eloquence. It arose out of a question of tithes, in substance, and has a twofold significance in Revolutionary history. In the first place, it served to undermine the influence of the Anglican hierarchy ; and secondly, it drew into question the right of Parliament to set aside a Virginia law respecting a matter essentially domestic,—this very matter of tithes. Singularly enough, it united ecclesiastical and civil questions as causes of the Revolution in Virginia, as they had been united, yet with a difference, in Massachusetts from the beginning of her settlement.

If we desire to know the attitude of some of the Virginians, — how many, is only matter of conjecture,—near the time when the war broke out, we have the most authentic intelligence. Madison, writing to Bradford in Pennsylvania, in April, 1774, says, "Our Assembly is to meet the 1st of May, when it is expected something will be done in behalf of the Dissenters. Petitions, I hear, are already forming among the persecuted Baptists, and I fancy it is in the thoughts of the Presbyterians also, to intercede for greater liberty in matters of religion. . . . The sentiments of our people of fortune and fashion, in this respect, are vastly different from what you have been used to. That liberal, catholic and equitable way of thinking, as to the rights of conscience, which is one of the characteristics of a free people, and so strongly marks the people of your province, is but little known among the zealous adherents of our hierarchy. . . . Besides, the clergy are a numerous and powerful body, have

great influence at home by reason of their connection with, and dependence on, the bishops and Crown, and will naturally employ all their arts and interest to depress their rising adversaries, for such they must consider Dissenters who rob them of the good-will of the people, and may, in time, endanger their livings and security." In the previous January, he wrote to the same, "I want again to breathe your free air. . . . Poverty and luxury prevail among all sorts ; pride, ignorance and knavery among the priesthood. . . . This is bad enough, but it is not the worst I have to tell you. . . . There are at this time in the adjacent county not less than five or six well-meaning men in close jail for publishing their religious sentiments, which, in the main, are very orthodox." In another letter to the same, he says what is much to the point, "If the Church of England had been the established and general religion in all the northern colonies, as it has been among us here, and uninterrupted tranquillity had prevailed throughout the continent, it is clear to me that slavery and subjection might and would have been gradually insinuated among us."<sup>1</sup>

From the foregoing extracts, it is obvious how Madison regarded the efforts of the New England Puritans in their resistance to the imposition of Episcopacy ; but that he was not pleased with all their conduct, appears from the following : "I congratulate you on your heroic proceedings in Philadelphia with regard to the tea. I wish Boston may conduct matters with as much discretion as they seem to do with boldness." This is also relevant to the Revolution : "I verily believe the frequent assaults that have been made on America (Boston especially) will in the end prove of real advantage."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letters of Madison, i. 10 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 10. In stating the motives which drew the people into the Revolu-

From the foregoing outline of a phase of ecclesiastical history in the Massachusetts Colony may be seen how early, as well as continuously, the religious element operated as a cause of the Revolution; and how — and yet with what difference — Virginia came to stand on the same ground with the former colony.

#### ORIGIN OF THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION IN MASSACHUSETTS.

Although ecclesiasticism stands first among the causes which prepared the Massachusetts colonists for the Revolution, and was influential in precipitating that event, yet the event itself was a disruption of the civil and political relations between the contending parties, and as such should be traced to its origin.

Soon after the restoration of Charles II., the colonies came to have a common grievance in the operation of the Navigation Laws and Acts of Trade,<sup>1</sup> which were designed to pour

tion, it ought not to be concealed that there were some not altogether creditable. Madison gives this: "As to the sentiments of the people of this Colony with respect to the Bostonians [in regard to the Port Bill], I can assure you I find them very warm in their favor. . . . It must not be denied, though, that the Europeans, especially the Scotch, and some interested merchants among the natives, discountenance such proceedings as far as they dare, alleging the injustice and perfidy of refusing to pay our debts to our generous creditors at home." *Ib.* 16. Boucher is more explicit on this subject. He says, "Among other circumstances favorable to a revolt of America, that of the immense debt owing by the colonists to the merchants of Great Britain deserves to be reckoned as not the least. It was estimated at three millions sterling; and such is the spirit of adventure of British merchants, and of such extent are their capitals and their credit, that not many years ago I remember to have heard the amount of their debts to this country calculated at double that sum: it is probably now trebled." *View*, xl.

<sup>1</sup> "If any man wishes to investigate thoroughly the causes, feelings and principles of the Revolution, he must study this Act of Navigation and the Acts of Trade." And of those who wrote in favor of their enforcement,

the wealth of commerce into the lap of England, and, by the prohibition of certain manufactures in the colonies, to create a market for English productions; but previous to the Stamp Act, there was no British regulation which produced the same practical results in all the colonies. Most of the manufactures were in New England, while her lumber and the tobacco of Virginia — for cotton was not yet, and rice and indigo were grown only on a limited territory of the Carolinas — constituted the bulk of American commerce. These circumstances served to bring Massachusetts and Virginia to the same platform in the Revolution. They also explain in some degree the backwardness of some other colonies whose interests were less severely affected by the British commercial policy. But these resemblances in certain facts of Massachusetts and Virginia affairs in their relation to the common cause should not lead us to overlook the essential differences in their civil and ecclesiastical history.

Massachusetts history more immediately concerns us. Whatever rights the king may have intended to confer upon the members of the Massachusetts Company by their charter of 4 March, 1629, two things are clear. First, it is clear that the charter is susceptible of a legal interpretation which makes it the basis of a government proper, with very large powers, having little more than a formal dependence upon the Crown;<sup>1</sup> and it is equally clear that the colonists themselves were disposed to give, and did give, the most liberal construction to their charter powers. Hutchinson says of them, "Upon their removal they supposed their relations both to civil and ecclesiastical government of England, ex-

"All I can say is, that I read them all in my youth, and that I never read them without being set on fire." Adams's Works, x. 320, 336.

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of this subject by the late Prof. Joel Parker. *Mass. and its Early History*, 357.

cept so far as a special reserve was made by their charter, was at an end, and that they had right to form such new model of both as pleased them."<sup>1</sup> On this construction of their powers they acted.

But the home government took an entirely different view of their powers, as well as of the conduct of the colonists in their exercise of them. As early as 28 April, 1634, a commission for regulating plantations was issued to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Keeper and others, to inquire, besides other matters, "whether any privileges or liberties granted to the colonists by their charter were hurtful to the king, his crown, or prerogative royal, and if so, to cause the same to be revoked."<sup>2</sup>

\*Here began the long contest which raged with changing fortunes until the treaty of peace in 1783. It was an endeavor, on one side, to set up and maintain a free and essentially independent government; and on the other side, to overthrow such a government, reduce the colonists to monarchical subjection, and regulate their affairs agreeably to the imperial policy. To such a contest there could be only one result: the colonists were sure to win. Growth, development, a boundless continent, remoteness, the inherited fierce spirit of liberty which neither fire nor steel had been able to subdue, and invincible courage, in time would settle the question. It was a question of time, and this they seem to have felt all through their history until the final consummation of their expectations. In any other view of the subject, their conduct was neither consistent nor entirely to their credit.

Chalmers, an accurate though unfriendly historian, has sketched the progress of the colony towards independency

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Mass. i. 368.

<sup>2</sup> Parker, *ut sup.* 375.

for the first fifty years, in the following words: "Massachusetts, in conformity with its accustomed principles, acted, during the civil wars, almost altogether as an independent state. It formed leagues, not only with the neighboring colonies, but with foreign nations, without the consent or knowledge of the government of England. It permitted no appeals from its courts to the judicatories of the sovereign State, without which a dependence cannot be preserved or enforced. And it refused to exercise its jurisdiction in the name of the Commonwealth of England. It assumed the government of that part of New England which is now called New Hampshire, and even extended its powers farther eastward, over the province of Maine. And, by force of arms, it compelled those who had fled from its persecution beyond its boundaries, into the wilderness, to submit to its authority. It erected a mint at Boston, impressing the year 1652 on the coin as the era of independence . . . thus evincing to all, what had been foreseen by the wise, that a people of such principles, religious and political, settling so great a distance from control, would necessarily form an independent State."<sup>1</sup>

Chalmers's statement is not exaggerated. It matters little with what intent respecting their future political relations the colonists embarked for Massachusetts Bay. Their ecclesiastical independence was an avowed purpose from the beginning; and circumstances of which they promptly availed themselves favored the formation of an independent civil state. Nor should their actual condition at the time of the Restoration be overlooked in reading their subsequent history down to the Revolution.

This state of affairs in the Puritan colony, the refuge of the Regicides, could hardly have been other than displeasing

<sup>1</sup> Political Annals, 181.



to Charles II. and his advisers. They determined to change it, but their success was partial and temporary. Undoubtedly the loss of their charter was a serious blow to the colonists. It was their first fall, but they soon regained their feet. The substituted government under the presidencies of Dudley and Andros was resisted by all prudent means, and by violence even, before a knowledge of the progress of the Revolution of 1689 had opened a fair prospect of success. The charter of 1692 was forced upon the colonists in derogation of their acquired constitutional rights; and had they then, or at any time down to the Revolution of 1775, quietly submitted, the result would have been serious to their liberties. But they did not submit, though then, as at the later period, there were those who counselled submission; and during the succeeding century there were infractions of their constitutional rights in which, from prudential considerations, they silently acquiesced.

The king, by his Court of Chancery, abrogated the first charter, and imposed upon the colony one less favorable to popular rights. Here is the answer of the colonists in their Declaration of Rights of the same year, entitled an act setting forth general privileges: "No aid, tax, tallage, assessment, custom, loan, benevolence or imposition whatsoever shall be laid, assessed, imposed or levied on any of their Majesties' subjects or their estates, on any color or pretence whatsoever, but by the act and consent of the governor, council and representatives of the people assembled in general court."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts and Resolves Province Massachusetts Bay, i. 40. Palfrey says, "If this had been confirmed, the cause of dispute which brought about the independence of the United States would have been taken away. But such proved not to be the will of the Privy Council of King William." *Hist. New Eng.* iv. 139. This statement is misleading. It is quite true that the Council disallowed the whole act, but fortunately they specified

It is not easy to overestimate the importance of this Declaration of Colonial Rights. In the very first year of the new charter the General Court opened the contest on the grounds on which, eighty years later, after some preliminary skirmishing on less tenable positions, the battle was fought and independence won. It is also interesting to know that in 1765, at which time John Adams intervened in public affairs, in his first public address before the governor and council, on the question of opening the courts which had been closed for lack of stamps, he took the identical position of the General Court in 1692; and again, in the general congress of 1774, in the Declaration of Rights of the colonies.

Nor was resistance confined to mere declarations. Their obstruction of the Navigation Laws and Acts of Trade,<sup>1</sup>

the grounds of their objections. These objections relate to section 8, respecting the allowance of bail, and section 9, which relates to escheat and forfeitures. To the sections which declare general rights—the colonial Magna Charta—no objections were made, and they consequently retained the political significance which inheres in all unchallenged claims of right.

<sup>1</sup> In 1698, when the General Court was asked to pass laws enforcing the Acts of Trade, even the conservative councillors insisted “that they were too much cramped in their liberties already, and they would be great fools to abridge, by law of their own, the little that was left them.” Hildreth, ii. 202. This spirit became hereditary. John Adams has said, “These acts never had been executed, and there never had been a time when they would have been, or could have been, obeyed.” Letter to Tudor, March 29, 1818, *Novanglus*, 245.

In 1728, when Governor Burnett, under royal instructions insisted that the General Court should fix by law the governor's salary, instead of leaving it to depend upon the temper of that body from year to year, they persistently refused, “because it is an untrodden path, which neither we nor our predecessors have gone in; . . . because it seems necessary to form, maintain and uphold our constitution; . . . because it is our undoubted right to raise and dispose of moneys for the public service of our free accord, without any compulsion; and because, if we should now give up this right, we shall open a door to many other inconveniences.” See *Journal of the Gen. Court*.

To these maxims of policy and government, they and their successors

their assumption of powers not granted by charter, their refusal to transmit their laws for examination, or allow appeals from their judicial decisions, at length produced their legitimate results in England; and in 1701, as oftentimes later, called forth impatient notes of warning from the Board of Trade: "The denial of appeals is a humor which prevails so much in proprietary and charter plantations, and the independency they thirst after is now so notorious, that it has been thought fit those considerations and other objections should be laid before the Parliament."<sup>1</sup> But these warnings and threats were disregarded until the patience of the home government was exhausted, and a bill for the repeal of the charter was introduced, which failed in the exigencies of more pressing concerns.

Under the first charter all officers were elected directly or indirectly by the people; under the second charter the governor was appointed by the crown, with a negative upon the election of the speaker and councillors chosen by the House. To this invasion of their old constitution the people lacked the power of forcible resistance; but the popular party, under the consummate leadership of Cooke, neutralized the governor's power, and held him in thrall, by exercising their constitutional right of determining his salary. And this they continued to do with exasperating persistency and disregard of the royal instructions, quite down to the Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

adhered to the end, notwithstanding royal menaces. This was revolution, as clearly as any declaration which more immediately preceded the war.

<sup>1</sup> Palfrey, iv. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Palfrey has graphically described the chronic contests between the royal governors and the representatives, as also between the latter and the more conservative council, all of which is more fully seen in the journal of the House, which, from 1715 to 1730, he does not appear to have consulted. "The House of Representatives began to print its journal just

This view of the beginning and progress of the contest, which ended in the Revolution, might be supported by much additional evidence; but I trust that, even in the foregoing imperfect sketch, it fairly appears that the Massachusetts Puritans came to the Bay that they might be free and inde-

before the beginning of Belcher's administration, the first publication being of the proceedings of May 27, 1730." *History*. iv. 532, *n*. This is erroneous. The printed journals of the House—and I am informed that they exist in no other form—begin with 25th May, 1715, and were continued without interruption till the Revolution. In his concluding chapter he has deemed it necessary to excuse the conduct of the popular branch towards the Crown and its representatives. But this depends. If the people of Massachusetts, between 1692 and 1774, their original charter having been taken away and another forced upon them, regarded themselves as within the realm, entitled to all the rights and immunities of British subjects, and bound to bear their share of the burdens imposed by the imperial policy, it is not difficult to understand why, in the eyes of the government and people of Great Britain, and even those of the neighboring colonies, their conduct was regarded as captious and rebellious. Compared with the burdens borne by their fellow-subjects within the three kingdoms, their own were light, and their condition prosperous. People understand the operations of governmental policy. They know how unequally tariffs and navigation laws affect different sections, classes and interests; and yet they submit to them for reasons satisfactory to the majority. Our ancestors neither liked nor submitted to this policy; they obstructed, disobeyed and evaded its operation so far as was consistent with their safety.

Nor could they endure with patience, or treat with decent respect, the governors sent to rule over them, and still less the natives raised to that high but most uncomfortable position. From one point of view it is difficult to see why; for these representatives of the Crown, in ability, learning, character and good dispositions, would compare favorably with those chosen by themselves under the Constitution, and were angels of light compared with those we have inflicted on our territories. Except that they were royal governors, it is not easy to find any insuperable objection to Bellomont, Shute, Burnett, Shirley, or even Bernard.

But, on the other hand, if we find, as I think the colonists found, in the repeal of the first charter, and the imposition of a royal government upon a people essentially free and independent, the justifying cause of irreconcilable hostility, and an invincible determination to throw it off on

pendent in their civil and ecclesiastical affairs; that with the first monition of danger in the days of Charles the First, they determined to maintain their independence at all hazards; that the contest, thus begun, continued with varying fortunes until the final decision of the questions involved was referred to arms; and, finally, that during these hundred and fifty years of contention, the colonial constitution was growing and developing itself into a free republican constitution, as the basis, measure and protection of all their rights.

#### JOHN ADAMS'S ATTITUDE TO THE REVOLUTION.

Against this background of civil and ecclesiastical history, in the Massachusetts-Bay colony, John Adams appeared on the Revolutionary stage. He had studied this history carefully, and its significance in relation to coming events he fully appreciated. It was revolution, and had been revolution from the overthrow of the first charter. That he so regarded it, he has expressly told us. From the outset, with his first public utterance, he placed himself squarely on this basis of the provincial constitution, and there he stood, constant, consistent, to the end. This is his great distinction. From it he overthrew Hutchinson and

favorable occasion, then their ninety years of strife, obstruction and hostility towards the Crown and its representatives, and final appeal to arms, become clear, reasonable, patriotic, and worthy of perpetual remembrance and benediction — and, least of all, demand apology.

The people out of New England, except the Virginians, had no similar experience, and but little knowledge of the real situation of the Massachusetts Puritans. Hence it is not strange that they, in common with those of the British Islands, had come to regard the Yankees with prejudice and dislike; or that with reluctance they finally placed themselves on the Massachusetts grounds, as they did under the lead of John Adams.

Leonard, otherwise unassailable. Any other position was full of logical pitfalls; this was sound, clear, tenable, and on it the contest was decided in Massachusetts.

Had the history of the other colonies been the same as that of Massachusetts, with its formative influence upon the people and their leaders, the decision of the question would have been the same as hers, and the consummation of the Revolution would have been comparatively easy. Had Massachusetts with New England finally stood alone, the day of her deliverance must have been postponed. But with Virginia and Massachusetts in alliance — and, notwithstanding a general dissimilarity, there were facts common to their history which brought them shoulder to shoulder — the Revolution, though difficult, was not impossible.

It was this difficulty which John Adams encountered and overcame at the head of the national party which he, more than any other man, gathered, inspired and led.

For the American Revolution, like all epochal movements in the direction of nationality and freedom, depended upon the movement of parties. These now demand our notice.

#### THE REVOLUTION INEVITABLE.

When the Revolutionary struggle in Massachusetts, which had been suspended during the events which culminated in the destruction of the French power in America, broke out anew with the Stamp Act of 1765, there seems to have been a feeling, common to all the colonies, that growth, situation and conflicting interests would in time sever the political relations which existed between the mother country and her colonies; and this opinion, if such that may be called which so vaguely existed in their minds, was the opinion of Hutchinson and Oliver no less than of James Otis and

Samuel Adams. It is true they disclaimed this, sometimes with vehemence. John Adams did so.<sup>1</sup>

He said that at no time before the Declaration of Independence was he averse to reconciliation, and that he had no desire to see the relations with England severed. There is abundant similar testimony. The talk of the warmest of the patriots was full of loyalty to the king, and of affection for the mother country. Nor were they insincere. They gloried in the name of Britons. Ties of blood, and attachment to the old home, were strong, and their pulse quickened with memories of Pepperell before the bastions of Louisburg, and of Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham.

But beliefs are not necessarily desires, and we recognize as inevitable many things which we deprecate. Could the colonists have been blind to facts and tendencies which all the world saw? The testimony on this point is clear and decisive. The following are only a few of the observations which have been collected by writers on this period of our history: "In his notes upon England, which were probably written about 1750, Montesquieu had dilated upon the restrictive character of the English commercial code, and had expressed his belief that England would be the first nation abandoned by her colonies. A few years later, Argenson, who has left some of the most striking political predictions upon record, foretold in his memoirs that the English colonies in America would one day rise against their mother country; that they would form themselves into a republic, and that they would astonish the world by their prosperity. In a discourse delivered before the Sorbonne in 1750, Turgot compared the colo-

<sup>1</sup> And yet he has told us that long before the war broke out, he and Jonathan Sewall, the loyalist, agreed in their sentiments respecting public affairs, and both were of the opinion that the British ministry and Parliament would force the colonists to appeal to arms. Works, ii. 78.

nies to fruits which only remain on the stem till they have reached the period of maturity, and he prophesied that America would some day detach herself from the parent tree. Still earlier than Turgot's prophecy, Kalm, the Swedish traveller, contended that the presence of the French in Canada, by making the English colonists depend for their security on the support of the mother country, was the main cause of the submission."<sup>1</sup>

But more decisive as to the prevalence of this belief among the colonists are some of their own words. Dr. Andrew Eliot, writing to Hollis, in England, December, 1767, says, "We are not ripe for disunion; but our growth is so great, that in a few years, Great Britain will not be able to compel our submission;"<sup>2</sup> and in 1772, Dr. Charles Chauncy said, "that in twenty-five years, there would be more people here than in the three kingdoms, the greatest empire on earth."<sup>3</sup>

But no one, save John Adams, expressed this under-current of thought so clearly as William Livingston, in 1768. "Americans, the finger of God points out a mighty empire to your sons. . . . The day dawns in which this mighty empire is to be laid by the establishment of a regular American Constitution. . . . Peace or war, famine or plenty, poverty or affluence, — in a word, no circumstance, whether prosperous or adverse, can happen to our parent; nay, no conduct of hers, whether wise or imprudent — no possible temper of hers, whether kind or cross-grained — will put a stop to this building. There is no contending with omnipotence; and the predispositions are so numerous and well

<sup>1</sup> Lecky's *Hist. Eighteenth Century*, iii. 291. Bancroft has also treated this question in *Hist. U.S.*; and see Frothingham's *Rise of the Republic*, 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Mass. Hist. Coll.* 420, xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, ii. 304.



adapted to the rise of America, that our success is indubitable.”<sup>1</sup>

No one can read the history of the colony in its original sources without meeting evidence of the existence of the belief that the time would come when the colonies would grow into a great and independent empire. Not that they wished to set up for themselves at once. On the contrary, quite apart from any sentiment of loyalty, it is not improbable that they were too fully sensible of the advantages of their position as appendages of the crown, with the privilege of drawing upon the imperial resources in warding off the attacks of the French, which, as independent colonies, they would be obliged to meet with their own men and money. Nor did they look forward to any definite time when it would be for their advantage to terminate these relations, nor to any specific course of action which would hasten that event. Nevertheless, their political action tended to render that result inevitable; nor was the feeling which inspired this action allowed to subside; for, from the earliest days down to the war, whenever they showed restiveness under the British rule, they were charged with aiming at independence.<sup>2</sup>

The Massachusetts colonists may not, as they said, have aimed at an independence, yet they steadily, and seemingly not unconsciously, pursued a course which would inevitably lead to it.

From the first, it seems to have been inevitable that the political relations between Great Britain and her colonies in America should be finally severed; but not the time nor the mode. When and how — whether by the silent influence of

<sup>1</sup> The American Whig, quoted with variations by Boucher, *View*, xxvi., and by Frothingham, *Rise of the Republic*, 244.

<sup>2</sup> See Evelyn's *Diary*, May 26, 1671, *et seq.* Also a letter from Dummer to the House, quoted in Palfrey, iv. 407, *n.*

growth, or as the result of violence — were questions in abeyance, and subject to chance. The lots were cast, and it was war.

#### THE REVOLUTION PRECIPITATED BY PARTY ACTION.

But war was not resorted to merely as the solution of difficulties which arose from the growth and development of the colonies. They had not reached that stage — in time sure to come — when union made subjugation impossible. Undertaken solely on that ground, the war, as we now see, was premature. The colonies were not ripe for it. Nor were they strong enough for it. Unaided, they would have failed, as fail they did until aided. The war was precipitated by party action in Massachusetts. The opposite view, which has led to infinite misconception of the revolutionary struggle, finds countenance only in the general and apparently spontaneous uprising of the continent in resistance to the Stamp Act. But that demonstration was utterly deceptive, as afterwards appeared, so far as it seemed to indicate any settled conviction and determination. It was a commercial protest, backed by no ulterior purpose of forcible resistance. The repeal of the Act, notwithstanding the re-affirmance of the principle in the Declaratory Act, apparently satisfied the public mind everywhere out of New England — perhaps out of Massachusetts. It seems to have been so even in Virginia. Jefferson's statement on this point is clear, and it is decisive. In Virginia, between 1769 and 1773, he says, "Nothing of particular excitement occurring for a considerable time, our countrymen seemed to fall into a state of insensibility to our situation; the duty on tea, not yet repealed, and the Declaratory Act of a right in the British Parliament to bind us by their laws in all cases whatsoever, still suspended over us." And John Adams, as late as

1772, writes, "Still quiet at the southward; and at New York, they laugh at us."

This doubtless correctly represents the apathy everywhere prevailing out of Massachusetts. The real state of the case seems to have been, if the colonies are regarded as a whole, that the opposition to the British acts was based on pecuniary interests rather than on deeply seated political convictions; and when the immediate danger of taxation passed away, the popular hostility subsided, as Jefferson says. But the situation in Massachusetts was peculiar. In the first place, the ecclesiastical question, instead of being one of tithes, and of yesterday, as in Virginia, was as old as the colony, and laid hold on the deepest and most sacred convictions of the people; and, as we have seen, it was a burning question, entirely independent of any question of parliamentary taxation, and wholly unaffected by the repeal of the Stamp Act, or the modifications of the other revenue measures. And in the next place, as we have also seen, there had always existed in Massachusetts, as in no other colony, two distinctly arrayed parties divided on questions directly leading up to colonial independence. And in these circumstances, rather than in any exclusive virtue or intelligence of this colony — I speak this with bated breath — is to be found the reason why Massachusetts was earliest and most persistent in the war to which she furnished nearly one third of the troops brought into the field, although her territory, before the close of the first year, was freed from the foot of the invader.

The war began in Massachusetts. It was brought on by the action of parties. These parties, the radicals and the conservatives,<sup>1</sup> were as old as the race, and will survive with it.

<sup>1</sup> Adams to Jefferson: "You say our divisions began with Federalism and anti-Federalism. Alas! they began with human nature; they have

They came over with Winthrop. At first, these graduates of old Cambridge were sufficiently, though somewhat incongruously, occupied in framing ordinances respecting yoking and ringing of swine, party fences, and the laying out of townways and highways; but these affairs, with some others of more importance, attended to, and inter-state affairs, after the subsidence of Laud's demonstrations, being in abeyance, they divided on theological polemics, and thus preserved the civilization which was imperilled in a frozen, savage wilderness. But the arrival of Charles's commissioners in 1664 made hot work for both parties; and the historian of New England has recorded, "that before the close of the first century, political parties had arrayed themselves not only upon local questions, but also upon questions *of the relation of the Colonies to the Empire.*"

With the inauguration of the new government in 1692, party strife was renewed and continued, with intervals of repose, through the entire provincial period. Party questions were somewhat in abeyance through the French wars to the treaty of peace in 1763, but became grave during the period of commercial torpidity which ensued, and rancorous upon the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765. Nor are we permitted to believe that the magnitude of the interests involved, or the serious consequences likely to flow from erroneous action, preserved the discussion from intemperance, or that conclusions were reached with sole reference to the public weal. Contemporaneous newspapers and pamphlets, and the published proceedings of the people in

existed in America from its first plantation. . . . A Court and Country party have always contended. Whig and Tory disputed very sharply before the Revolution, and in every step during the Revolution. Every measure of Congress, from 1774 to 1787, inclusively, was disputed with acrimony, and decided by as small majorities as any question is decided in these days" [1812]. Works, x. 23.

town meeting assembled, and of their representatives in the General Court, contain ample evidence that the party heats, personal interests and mob violence, to which many of those now living were witnesses in the late civil war, had their prototypes in the Revolutionary era.

At both epochs and in both parties were found radicals and conservatives, statesmen and politicians, patriots and self-seekers, intelligent adherents and blind party devotees. At both epochs and in both parties, in the name of liberty and under the guise of patriotism, against persons whose only offence was a silent adherence to their own convictions, were committed acts of violence, instigated in the phrensy of party by those whose names and character should constitute denial, and recorded without disapprobation by historical partisans.

In the Revolution, parties were outlined by the general principles of their respective adherents, but were by no means homogeneous. There were those in the governmental or Tory party, as it then began to be called, who doubted neither the omnipotence of Parliament over the colonies, nor the wisdom of its exercise in levying a tax; while others were satisfied with the affirmation of the right. And in the patriotic party many deprecated a resort to forcible resistance who strenuously denied the British pretensions. Of these, Franklin and Dickinson were the most eminent; and as late as 1776, their opinions were the opinions of the majority out of New England.<sup>1</sup>

Adams writes to Plumer, "You inquire whether every member of Congress did, on the 4th of July, 1776, in fact, cordially approve of the Declaration of Independence. I then believed, and have not since altered my opinion, that there

<sup>1</sup> See Franklin's Letters in Tudor's *Otis*, 392, *n*, and *Mag. of Amer. Hist.* Sept. 1883, article *Dickinson*; also Hildreth, iii. 45, 57, 77.

were several who signed with regret, and several others with many doubts and much lukewarmness."<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of the clergy, the party affiliations of no class could be accurately predicted. Parents and children, brothers and sisters and life-long friends found themselves arrayed in hostile ranks, as religious and political convictions, marriage, social relations, interest,<sup>2</sup> or even accident, dictated.

The number of the people in each of these parties is not susceptible of precise determination, and varied somewhat with the changing fortunes of the contest. Many of those who finally adhered to the crown were among the most earnest denunciators of the Stamp Act. John Adams has recorded it as his opinion that "in 1765, the colonies were more unanimous than they have been since, either as colonies or states." From 1760 to 1766 was the purest period of patriotism, from 1766 to 1776, was the period of corruption. This agrees with the opinion of Jefferson, so far as he refers to the same period. Nor is there anything unusual in this phase of parties. So long as dissatisfaction was expressed by declarations of rights, or even mob violence, patriotism was cheap; but when it became apparent that affairs were drifting to armed resistance, uncertain in its issue, many who had been conspicuous as patriots drew back, and finally entrusted their fortunes to the government as the stronger party.

<sup>1</sup> Works, x. 35. See Frothingham, *Rise of the Republic*, 514 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> "The managers of our public affairs, like those on your side of the Atlantic," writes Dr. Eliot to Thomas Hollis, 10 December, 1767, "are governed by private views and the spirit of a party. Few have any regard to the good of the public. Men are patriots till they get in place and then they are! ! ! anything." *Mass. Hist. Coll.* xxxiv. 414.

## THE PARTY OF THE LOYALISTS.

Of the barristers in Boston and its immediate vicinity, Thacher died in 1765, Otis became incapacitated in 1771. Five were loyalists, and John Adams alone lived through the Revolution as the advocate of American independence. Twenty-four of the principal barristers and attorneys in the colony, and one hundred and twenty-three merchants and traders, including a few others, in Boston, signed the address to Gov. Hutchinson, 30 May, 1774; and similar addresses to Gov. Gage, as late as 14 October, 1775, were signed by the same class of people, and in still larger proportion to the population, in Salem and Marblehead. Plymouth County was the stronghold of the loyalists. On the evacuation of Boston, 17 March, 1776, Sir William Howe was accompanied by fifteen hundred of these people; and in September, 1778, the General Court specified, in an act forbidding their return, the names of more than three hundred citizens in the several counties. These numbers include only those who were conspicuous as landed proprietors or in the mercantile and professional classes. The Tories were in possession of the principal offices in the gift either of the crown or the people. As the conservative party, and having something to lose,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Adams gives the impressions which the wealthy delegates from the other colonies to the Congress of 1774 had received in respect to those of Massachusetts. It had been represented to them that Hancock was fortunately sick, and Mr. Bowdoin's relations thought that his large estate ought not to be put to hazard. So they sent Mr. Cushing, who was a harmless kind of man, but poor and wholly dependent on his popularity for his subsistence; Mr. Samuel Adams, who was a very artful, designing man, but desperately poor, and wholly dependent on his popularity with the lowest vulgar for his living, and John Adams and Robert Treat Paine, who were two young lawyers of no great talents, reputation or weight, who had no other means of raising themselves into consequence than by courting popularity. And they were all suspected of having

they were satisfied with the existing order of things, and in that state of mind found it easy to indulge the sentiment of loyalty which inheres in the British subject, in all lands, so long as he is allowed to do as he pleases. Not that the Tories were fonder of paying taxes than were the patriots, but they were content when the obnoxious tax was repealed, and were disinclined to make an issue on the Declaratory Act of the parliamentary right to tax. To these political sentiments was united the profoundest conviction that the colonists, unaided, could never withstand the power of the empire when put forth in its might, and that the hope of friendly intervention by the continental powers of Europe was a dream sure to be interrupted by a rude awakening. As the event showed, this was their fatal mistake.

Such was the party of the government, or the Loyalists. Such was the formidable party, intrenched in wealth, office and social influence, which confronted John Adams and his associates; and it is his and their glory to have overthrown it.

#### THE PATRIOTIC PARTY.

The patriotic party is less easily described, since it contained many heterogeneous elements. As a whole, it was the party of the opposition, such as is always found under all forms of government. In Massachusetts, its formation on well-defined issues antedates by more than a hundred years the resistance to the Stamp Act, and was coeval with the inauguration by Charles II. of those measures designed to reduce the colonies to subjection. The real purpose of this party, though seldom avowed, was, from the first, sub-

independence in view. Works, ii. 512. This, of course, is John Adams's statement, and it contains so much of truth and significance as to enhance our estimate of his candor.



stantial independence of the Crown of England. At no time was it troubled with scruples. It hoped immunity from the chastisement threatened by the king in his embroilment in foreign wars.<sup>1</sup> It resisted the abrogation of the old charter; it imprisoned Andros and Dudley; and when resistance proved unavailing, it sought to save the liberties of the people by neutralizing the anti-democratic elements in the new charter of 1692. The struggle thus begun never changed its character, and, as we have already seen, never ceased until the peace of 1783. Two things must never be lost sight of. First, that this resistance was the resistance of a party. From the first stage of the contest to the last, there was a Tory party which counselled submission; and this party was proportionally more numerous in its early than in its later stage. Secondly, that, from first to last, the action of the patriotic party was resistance and obstruction. It was not the attitude of slaves seeking their freedom, but of freemen resisting subjugation. The difference is immense, and on its perception depends a knowledge of the real character of the American Revolution, which was the final victory in a hundred years of party strife, with unbroken continuity of unvaried purpose, — the maintenance of independence rather than its acquirement, — originating in a province, but at length, and mainly through the influence of John Adams, enkindling the heart of a continent.

Besides reasons of state which embittered the colonists were some of a personal nature, affecting those especially who suffered under the usurpation of Andros, or were dis-

<sup>1</sup> "They say," writes a commissioner in 1665, "they can easily spin out seven years by writing, and before that time a change may come; nay, some have dared to say, who knows what the event of this Dutch war may be?" *Calendar of State Papers*, quoted by Prof. Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 68. *n.*

placed by Dudley. This personal element was never absent from the contest in any of its stages, and finally became one of the most potent forces in arraying the Massachusetts colonists in armed hostility to British authority.

The lull of political excitement during the French war was only temporary. With the restoration of peace the people, no longer distressed by the anxieties occasioned by war and irritated by the operations of the Anglican hierarchy, were ready to give ear to the whisperings concerning the ministerial purpose to raise a revenue in America. The passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 left no doubt on that subject. This was the occasion for the re-opening of old party questions, and party strife ensued, which continued with scarcely any mitigation until the war.

But this was true chiefly of Massachusetts. In the colonies to the southward the repeal of the Act was followed by the general apathy which so much alarmed and disgusted Jefferson. The facts verified the conjecture of Franklin. In his examination before the Commons in 1766, he was asked if the Americans would be satisfied with the repeal of the Stamp Act, notwithstanding the resolutions of Parliament as to the right; and his answer was, "I think the resolutions of Right will give them very little concern if they are never attempted to be carried into practice."

Additional reasons for the apparent change in public sentiment may be conjectured. At first it seems not to have been generally understood that all sums raised in America by taxation were to be expended there in the defence and government of the country. To this there doubtless were good practical and constitutional objections; but these would not be likely to strike the common mind with the same force as a project to replenish the British exchequer from the pockets of the colonists. Nor was it unlikely that the acts of violence

which everywhere accompanied the popular expression of disapprobation of the measure, should, on second thought, cause some apprehension in the minds of those friendly to law and order. Property also became alarmed.

But whatever may have been the reasons for the popular falling off, there can be no question as to the fact; and if it had been true in the same degree in Massachusetts as in the other colonies, it is doubtful whether the conflict would have occurred when it did.

In Massachusetts, however, there was to be no peace. The Stamp Act was repealed, but the Declaratory Act remained, and the Bishop of London did not stay his hand. The Puritan pulpit rang with unceasing alarm until its voice was drowned in the clangor of arms. Not one of the causes which had kept the royal governors in contention for sixty years was settled or in abeyance. New causes were constantly arising, — often made; and it was the evident determination of the patriotic party that they should be settled only in one way — with substantial independence of British authority in all matters of domestic policy. To these causes must be added the personal hostility, which had become deadly, between Bernard and Hutchinson on one side, and James Otis, Jr., and Samuel Adams on the other.

The last-mentioned causes kept the contest alive in Massachusetts, which seemed to be in a state of collapse in other colonies, until the arrival of the East India Company's teas revived colonial interest in public affairs.

#### SAMUEL ADAMS THE GREAT PARTY LEADER.

In the early stages of the controversy, international as well as local, James Otis, Jr., was the leader; but after a while his light began to flicker, and in 1771 went out and was seen no more. Thacher, less to be pitied than Otis, had

found an early grave. Joseph Hawley and Samuel Adams remained ; but Hawley's residence was remote from the scene of immediate conflict, and occasional fits of despondency rendered unreliable for sudden exigencies one of the most able and interesting, but little-known, patriots of the Revolution. Samuel Adams remained, and in all local, religious, political and personal relations, the Revolution in Massachusetts found in him its greatest leader.<sup>1</sup>

If his colony was not quite ripe for armed resistance, nor all of them strong enough, unaided, to carry through the contest if entered upon ; or if, as was the judgment of Hawley,<sup>2</sup> and as later events seemed to indicate, there was danger, on one hand, that the conflict would be precipitated without adequate preparation, and on the other, that the people would grow weary of the strife, — it was Samuel Adams who kept alive the spirit of resistance, and with infallible sagacity piloted the bark of liberty through these dangerous seas. Apathy might prevail elsewhere, but in Massachusetts it was not allowed to prevail. At one time there seemed to be danger ; but never was an exigency in human affairs more clearly discerned nor more resolutely met. Never was opposition more thoroughly organized, nor led with more consummate skill. To this work Samuel Adams gave his time without stint, his whole heart, and his admirable ability. His

<sup>1</sup> "Adams, I believe, has the most thorough understanding of liberty and her resources in the temper and character of the people though not in the law and constitution, as well as the most habitual, radical love of it, of any of them, as well as the most correct, genteel and artful pen. He is a man of refined policy, steadfast integrity, exquisite humanity, genteel erudition, obliging, engaging manners, real as well as professed piety, and a universal good character, unless it should be admitted that he is too attentive to the public, and not enough so to himself and his family." John Adams in 1765. Works, ii. 163.

<sup>2</sup> See a remarkable letter on this point, written from Northampton, February 22, 1775, to Thomas Cushing, in Mass. Hist. Coll. xxxiv. 393.

convictions of the justice of the cause were founded on the rock. His faith in its ultimate triumph was as the faith of the martyrs. He was the last of the Puritans, with the zeal of the first of the Puritans.<sup>1</sup> He hated kings, but most of all, popes and bishops. The crown and the crozier were alike detested symbols of tyranny. The king was an offence far away; Hutchinson was an offence near at hand. He gathered, united and led the patriotic party of his day. Into it he infused his own courage, zeal and constancy. He was the unrivalled politician of the Revolution. Without him it would never have occurred when it did, nor as it did. In this work Samuel Adams was the foremost and greatest man.

#### NATIONALIZATION OF THE REVOLUTION.

But the Revolution needed a statesman. Beginning in a colony, it was provincial. It required to be nationalized. It began on a party basis of local politics; it needed a constitutional basis. It had enlisted the sympathies and resources of a colony. It needed the sentiment of nationality and the resources of a continent. To supply these needs was the work of John Adams.

The country needed — and, as the ill-starred campaigns of 1776 showed, it was one of its sorest needs — one who could enlist the sympathies of continental Europe in behalf of the hard-pressed colonists, shield them from hostile intervention, and secure for them material assistance. For this work, no less by the happy constitution of his mind than by the varied experiences of his life, of all men, Franklin was best fitted.

<sup>1</sup> Adams to Morse: "If James Otis was Martin Luther, Samuel Adams was John Calvin . . . cool, abstemious, polished and refined, though more inflexible, uniform and consistent."

Finally, the Revolution needed a leader for its armies : it needed Washington.

Of these men, all required for the initiation and successful issue of the Revolution, each could do his own work supremely well, but neither, that of the others. In completeness and grandeur of character, Washington stands alone. In mass of intellect, Franklin is accounted first, and John Adams second ; but if amount and variety, as well as importance of service as statesmen, be taken into the account, Franklin and Adams might change places.

Under such circumstances of colonial history, John Adams appeared on the theatre of public affairs. Before we can rightly estimate his career we must know in what character he appeared. Of course he was not a Tory, nor was he a Son of Liberty, though elected as such. He neither represented nor did he ally himself to any merely political party. He put himself at the head of that great movement of the race in America towards nationality, visible to the discerning, as we have seen, everywhere except to those who were in it. John Adams himself was only vaguely conscious of it, or of his relations to it. In this he was like the monk of Erfurth and the son of the brewer of Huntingdon. But no less than Luther or Cromwell, he was elected to lead and direct the movement of an age.

At the age of twenty he said, "Soon after the Reformation a few people came into this new world for conscience' sake. Perhaps this apparently trivial incident may transfer the great empire of Europe into America. It looks likely to me ; for if we can remove the turbulent Gallies, our people, according to exactest computation, will in another century become more numerous than England itself. The way to keep us from setting up for ourselves, is to divide us." This was in 1755, four years before Wolfe's victory on the

Plains of Abraham, and five years before James Otis argued against the Writs of Assistance.

This divination of nationality in the future empire of America was not, as it has been regarded, the work of a meditative mind turned politician, but an intuition of that historic imagination already spoken of which led him in later years to head the movement that realized the prophetic vision of his youth. No two characters in our revolutionary period are more strongly contrasted than Benjamin Franklin and John Adams. Natives of the same colony, and in some respects representative of the spirit of its people, in others they differed as widely from it as they did from each other. Franklin's intellect was of the first order, under the supreme control of common sense, of which he was the incarnation. This determined his attitude to the Revolution. He was opposed to it so far as its promoters contemplated armed resistance to Great Britain. Always averse to war, he would have patiently waited until time and growth should sever the colonies from the mother country. He did not believe the colonies were strong enough to fight the king; but when Samuel Adams forced the hand of the minister, and war became inevitable, Franklin threw his great influence with the patriotic party. As matter of judgment, he was right. The colonists were not strong enough to withstand even the feeble generals of the king. At the time of French intervention the game of war had gone against them, and the last two years were fought largely with French troops and French money. Franklin's judgment was controlled by his great reason. He had no imagination. This is where he differed from John Adams. As Adams said of himself, "It had always been his destiny to mount breaches and lead the forlorn hope." He had faith in it. He had seen it all ages in the victorious van, and his imagination

was kindled by the historic review. It was just this sublime intuition of nationality which distinguished him among his contemporaries ; and this, united with great abilities and high courage, made him the first statesman of the Revolution.

The value of this gift to the cause which John Adams came to represent, or to himself personally, can hardly be overestimated. He had said that "by looking into history we can settle in our minds a clear and comprehensive view of the earth at its creation ; of its various changes and revolutions ; of the growth of several kingdoms and empires ; and that nature and truth, or rather truth and right, are invariably the same in all times and in all places." This intuition enabled him to discern in race tendencies, situation and growth, the inevitable result of the approaching contest ; and when the hour for choice came, he cast his fortunes not with the governmental party as might have been expected from his constitutional and professional conservatism, but with those ready to battle for freedom and nationality. And this faith in the prophetic movements of events left no room for doubt as to the justice of the cause, or of its ultimate success. And so he never quailed in the face of danger, never was disheartened by disaster, and every step was a step forward.

Besides the faculty by which John Adams divined the end and every intermediate step, from the beginning, in the logical order of events, he possessed another of scarcely less value to the cause. By constitution of mind, as well as by special education, he was constructive ; and in this order : before he tore down, he planned reconstruction. Governments were not the results of accident, but growths from germs, maturing, as the oak from the acorn, by laws of race, situation and the facts of national life. His reconstruction, therefore, as we shall see, was in accordance with these laws.



Familiar as he was with the theories of government from the republic of Plato to those of his own times, and not unwilling to adopt whatever would incorporate itself into that system which his race had found most serviceable, he had no faith in systems which lacked the sanction of proved utility. His work was new. To disrupt an empire was not new. It was not new to overthrow governments. But to overturn thirteen royal provinces, and, without intervening anarchy, to set up in their stead thirteen independent governments; to loose the bands of an empire, and re-form the contiguous parts into an united whole with such coherence as enabled it to maintain itself against formidable odds, — this was something new in history, and to many seemed impossible.

Samuel Adams represented the Puritan element in the contest in Massachusetts. To him the Revolution was the last in a series of events reaching back through a hundred years, to resist the imposition of the Anglican hierarchy on the descendants of the Puritans. Civil and religious liberty were indissolubly united in his affections, but his inspiration was religion. This fervor, which gave him power among his own people, detracted from his influence in those colonies in which the people regarded the Massachusetts Puritans as bigoted fanatics.

John Adams was also a believer in religion, but he had read Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke<sup>1</sup> and Hume. To him, religion had its place, — the first place in natural order in every well-regulated mind. But he was no bigot, and had no invincible repugnance to any form of religious belief.

And so, in civil government, he believed in orderly, con-

<sup>1</sup> Adams to Jefferson: "I have read Bolingbroke through more than fifty years ago, and more than five times in my life, and once within five years."

stitutional subordination. But, in his scheme, it was a subordination to laws, not men. He believed in laws. As a lawyer he admitted the supremacy of law; but as a statesman he recognized the distinction between those rules which in judicial tribunals determine the rights of persons, and those general maxims applicable only to legislation. In construing the British Constitution, or that of his own colony, it was not with him a question of original theory, but of present fact. "When Massachusettensis says that the king's dominions *must* have an uncontrollable power, I ask whether they *have* such a power or not," is his way of reasoning. What, by growth, development and actual operative force, have these several constitutions come to be, as matter of fact, to-day? Parliamentary supremacy is doubtless a constitutional maxim in England, and the supremacy of the Great and General Court, in all internal affairs, civil as well as ecclesiastical, is, and always has been, a constitutional maxim in the province of Massachusetts Bay. And in both cases the validity of these maxims is to be determined, not by the declarations or admissions of past ages, but by the potentiality of a present declaration. To the assumed right of Parliament to tax the colonies, as a corollary of parliamentary omnipotence, he offered no theory of constitutional construction, but answered, "Our provincial legislatures are the only supreme authorities in our colonies." Colonial constitutions, like the British Constitution, he assumed, were flexible, readily adapting themselves to changed circumstances, subject to growth and development, and the sole measure of the rights of the people, whenever, as matter of fact, they had come to rely upon them as such. Nor did he fail to perceive, nor shrink from the conclusion, that, when time and circumstances brought on the inevitable conflict, force would be the final arbiter. To the acceptance of

this doctrine he led the national mind, as represented in the Declaration of Rights by the Congress of 1774, and inspired it at a later date with the audacity to defy a power greater than its own.

Such seems to have been John Adams's theory of the provincial constitutions, though nowhere expressly formulated in words, and perhaps not even in his own mind ; but everywhere evinced by his conduct, not otherwise consistent or intelligible. He frequently met his antagonists, such as Hutchinson and Leonard, on their own ground, and sometimes overthrew them by skilful fence ; but his strength and his power were in his practical recognition of the American constitutions. And if, as has been suggested, he has nowhere given us a complete statement of his constitutional views during the controversial period, but left them to be inferred, as in the Declaration of Rights, he is not peculiar in this respect. Great leaders, especially if, like John Adams, they are men of action, are seldom the formulators of their own principles of conduct, and are not always conscious of them. They are men of intuitions ; and their chief distinction is, that they are the first to feel the movement of the age, recognize its significance, and give it beneficent direction.

Excepting the year 1770, when John Adams was a member of the General Court, he had no official relation to public affairs. In the vulgar strife between those who had place and those who wanted place, he felt no interest. Poor, ambitious, conscious of great powers, he doubtless desired opportunities for their exercise. He saw positions of power and emolument in his profession engrossed by the old historic families which adhered to the Crown. Into this charmed circle he gazed, he tells us, not without envy. But he was a man of principle, with a just sense of honor, and no demagogue. Poorly adapted for the game of politics,

and lacking the faculty which moulds the sentiments of numbers into some definite form of action, he made a poor figure as a politician. By the constitution of his mind, by taste and education, he was fitted for statesmanship; and when that career was open to him, he entered upon it with such success that he soon became recognized as the most commanding statesman of the country.

The Revolution encountered difficulties apart from the evident determination of the ministry to sustain the parliamentary authority. As a domestic question, it was to be rescued from party squabbles, and placed on such constitutional grounds as would satisfy the sound judgment of those on whom it depended for support, as well as the fervid patriotism of those whose obstreperous demonstrations were silenced by the first call to less noisy duty. It also required to be nationalized; for unless Massachusetts was to stand alone, and standing alone, to fail, it was essential that all the colonies, of diverse nationalities, histories and religions, and without special good-will to Massachusetts, should nevertheless unite with her on common ground, make her cause their cause, and count the work done only when a free, independent empire should rise out of the ruins of thirteen royal governments. The cause in Massachusetts did not stand exactly on the right basis. It was too local and personal. It was too largely a question between the ins and the outs to excite interest in the other colonies, and in the ecclesiastical contention they had no sympathy with the Massachusetts Puritans.

To one of less abundant resources, or less confidence in them; to one with less faith in the future empire of America, grounded on the historical development of nationality and constitutional government by the Anglo-Saxon race, the magnitude and difficulties would have been appalling. But

John Adams brought ability, courage and devotion to the cause, and he gained it. When he entered Congress in 1774, he found the representatives of the thirteen colonies brought together chiefly by commercial considerations, having no principle of cohesion, and no purpose of united action, except peaceful resistance to parliamentary taxation.<sup>1</sup> But before he left Congress in 1777, and more through his instrumentality than any other, these colonies had become *independent* states, some with constitutions for which he constructed the plan, and *united* states with the germ of a constitution which took shape under the Constitution of the United States, in which were embraced the essential features of the Constitution of Massachusetts, the work of his own hands. Such an opportunity has seldom presented itself to a statesman in any age or country; seldom has such opportunity been so successfully improved.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

The period between 1765 and 1775 was prolific of party pamphlets in which the parliamentary pretensions and colonial rights were discussed with zeal, and often with great ability. Massachusetts contributed her full share of this literature to the common cause, and added a series of state papers comprising messages from the royal governors, and answers from the two houses, together with resolutions from conventions and popular assemblies, probably unsurpassed in volume by similar productions emanating from any other colony. Owing to her peculiar situation, and the fre-

<sup>1</sup> In the Congress of 1774, "after the first flush of confidence was over, suspicions and jealousies began to revive. There were in all the Colonies many wealthy and influential men who had joined, indeed, in protesting against the usurpations of the mother country, but who were greatly disinclined to anything like a decided rupture." Hildreth, iii. 45.

quent occasion she gave for interference in her affairs by the king or his representatives, few constitutional questions of colonial import failed of exhaustive discussion. John Adams's contribution to this revolutionary literature was considerable in amount, and the direction he gave to it was followed by consequences of importance to the patriotic party in Massachusetts, and later, to the national party in Congress.

The Stamp Act, and other colonial measures which proceeded from the British ministry, became party questions on both sides of the water, and were discussed in Parliament with the heat which characterizes party declamation at all times. In those days, as well as in later days, and in grave histories, these declamatory utterances were regarded and cited as statesmanlike determinations of constitutional questions. Nothing can be more misleading. They were mainly party cries of the opposition, similar to those with which we became familiar in the congressional debates which preceded the late civil war. Chatham's splendid eloquence gave currency to declarations which had no foundation in constitutional law, and Camden, from whose judicial mind more caution might have been expected, conceded, and not long after denied, the American position; nor was either utterance without suspicion of political or personal motive. Their object was not to support the rights of the colonists, but to overthrow their opponents. There were those among the colonists at the time who held these partisan declarations at their just estimate. John Adams said, "I know very well that the opposition to ministry was the only valid ground on which the friendship for America that was professed in England rested." Camden, who had asserted with the colonists that taxation and representation were inseparable, later, in 1767, declared that his doubts were removed by the declaration of Parliament itself, and that its authority

must be maintained. But this attitude of the opposition in England, though not generally understood in America, was of great advantage to her cause. It encouraged the colonists in their resistance, and led to a feeble and vacillating policy in the ministry, which showed itself in the inefficient conduct of the war. (See *Quar. Rev.* Jan., 1884, p. 7.)

The questions of constitutional law raised by the parliamentary revenue measures affecting the colonies, neither at the time, nor since, have received a satisfactory solution. Regarded as questions of law determinable in courts of justice, or of the legislative power under the British Constitution, in which aspect a lawyer would at first be likely to regard them, John Adams might well have hesitated in forming an opinion. Otis at the outset took the ground that Acts of Parliament were not binding on the colonies; but on fuller consideration of the subject, in his work on the "Rights of the Colonies," he conceded the claim of parliamentary supremacy. This was Chatham's doctrine, coupled with a distinction between external and internal taxes: and Franklin had incautiously admitted "that an adequate representation in Parliament would probably be acceptable to the colonists." John Quincy Adams quotes Jefferson's statement, "that in the ground which he took, that the British Parliament never had any authority over the colonies, any more than the Danes and Saxons of his own age had over the people of England, he never could get anybody to agree with him but Mr. Wythe. It was too absurd." He then adds, "In truth, the question of right as between Parliament and the colonies was one of those upon which it is much easier to say who was wrong than who was right. The pretension that they had the right to bind the colonies in all cases whatever, and that which denied them the right to bind in any case whatever, were the two extremes equally unfounded; and

yet it is extremely difficult to draw the line where the authority of Parliament commenced and where it closed.”<sup>1</sup>

John Adams drew the line against the authority of Parliament in any case whatever, except by the colonial consent; and this position, taken in the earliest stages of the controversy, he consistently maintained to the end. And this was the only tenable ground. Once admit the supremacy of the British Constitution in regulating the internal affairs of the colonies, and there was no ground for constitutional resistance to any acts affecting them, as distinguished from the people within the three kingdoms. On that ground neither Hutchinson nor Leonard was answered.<sup>2</sup> It was a question of fact, and chiefly as to time. When the colonial charters were the evidence of corporate existence within the realm for extra-territorial purposes, they, like all domestic charters, were subject to alteration or repeal; but when, by lapse of time, growth and usage, they had become governments proper, regulating their own internal affairs, they then became colonial constitutions which excluded all other authority. This I understand the position of John Adams to have been. Burke recognized the effect of usage in determining constitutional rights. “Do not burden them with taxes; you were not used to do so from the beginning. Let this be your reason for not taxing.” Of course the British

<sup>1</sup> Life and Works, viii, 282.

<sup>2</sup> General political maxims never have had, and probably never will have, practical force, either in courts or legislative bodies. To quote the maxim that taxation and representation were inseparable, as a guide to legislation, or as a ground for legal resistance to a law already passed, while five sixths of the people of England, whole counties, large towns, and many of the Channel Islands, were, or had been, wholly unrepresented, though fully taxed, was practically as absurd as for a fugitive slave to quote the Declaration of Independence or the preamble to the Constitution in a court of law, or for a legislator, in either House of Congress,



Parliament were quite at liberty to take an entirely different view of the question, as they did, and its practical solution depended on the relative strength of the parties.

John Adams was brought face to face with this question, and took his position in regard to it, before the Governor and Council in 1765, on the petition of the town of Boston for re-opening the Courts, which had been closed for the want of stamps required by the Act. A few days before he had written in his diary, "It is my opinion that by this inactivity we discover cowardice, and too much respect for the Act. This rest appears to be, by implication at least, an acknowledgment of the authority of Parliament to tax us. And if this authority is once acknowledged and established, the ruin of America will be inevitable." This was on the 18th of December. On the 20th is the following: "I grounded my argument on the invalidity of the Stamp Act, it not being in any sense our act, having never consented to it."

On the validity of this position John Adams staked his legal reputation, his hopes, his fortunes and the welfare of his people.

It is one of the highest claims of Washington to the gratitude of mankind that he carried the country through a long war in strict subordination to the civil authority; and it raises our respect for John Adams, that, his position once taken on the fundamental law of his colony, he maintained it with courage and fidelity, without swerving from principle, and without recourse to the arts of a demagogue. He began his career as a statesman, and such he remained to the end.

After the death of Thacher and the retirement of James Otis, Jr., John Adams became the trusted adviser of the patriot leaders on all legal and constitutional questions. They had need of him, for the party which adhered to the Crown was led by very able men, who carried with them

he influence of wealth, social position and official station. A cause supported by such men as Hutchinson, Sewall and Leonard could be overthrown only by powerful assailants. Better than any man of affairs save Hutchinson, John Adams understood the history, legislation and constitutional law of his colony; and probably no man of his day, on either side of the Atlantic, had more carefully considered the foundations of government, or the formative process by which constitutions adapt themselves to the changing circumstances of national life. He recognized their present validity only so far as they conformed to the laws of national growth; and he saw that they retained their identity only as the oak is identical with the acorn from which it sprung.

In the legal and constitutional controversies which preceded hostilities, the dialectical force was by no means wholly on the side of the patriotic party. Hutchinson was a formidable antagonist, and more than once caused anxiety in the camp of the Whigs. And he was surpassed by Daniel Leonard, whose weekly papers, published in the winter of 1774-5, under the signature of "Massachusettensis," raised this anxiety to positive alarm. These celebrated letters, — if such can be called celebrated which no one reads: a classic lost to literature amid the ruins of the cause which brought it forth, — written with evident sincerity of purpose and almost pathetic tenderness of feeling, were likely to affect the popular mind very powerfully, at a time when the colony seemed to be drifting into war. His constitutional argument was strong — perhaps unanswerable on the ground on which he put it; and his appeals to the judgment, good sense and right feeling of the community required an answer. The eyes of the Whigs were turned to John Adams. He had just returned from the Congress at Philadelphia, in which, with infinite difficulty, he had brought the delegates to the true

fighting ground of the Revolution. With the constitutional argument he was perfectly familiar. The answers of the House of Representatives, in January and March, 1773, to Hutchinson's messages, were indebted to him for their legal astuteness, which was adopted by Samuel Adams and used with the skill which characterizes his acknowledged compositions. I refer to these controversial papers only for the purpose of showing the attitude of John Adams to the main question. The Tory writers, assuming that the colonists were British subjects within the realm, and with rights and duties determinable by the construction ordinarily given to the British Constitution in practical legislation, had little difficulty in making plain that no line could be drawn between absolute parliamentary supremacy in all cases whatever, and total independence. This was forcing the controversy to an issue for which the colonists, as a whole, were not ripe, as John Adams had sorrowfully learned in the recent Congress at Philadelphia. As a Massachusetts issue he could accept it with prompt decision; but there were other parties to be conciliated, and he necessarily wrote with a view to the state of feeling in the other colonies, and in England as well, where the contest was regarded with intense interest. In discussing the question as one arising on the construction of the British Constitution, he showed both power and learning in attack as well as in defence; but he was in close quarters with an antagonist worthy of his steel, and as is usual in such cases, he experienced the varying fortunes of war.

But on his own ground — the position taken before the governor and council, in 1765, on the petition for opening the courts; and later, in the fourth article of the Declaration of Rights by the Congress at Philadelphia — he was on firm, constitutional ground, and historically correct, if the general

course of colonial history, rather than isolated facts, is regarded. Some of these positions have been already referred to ; but as he is about to pass from the provincial to the national stage, and as the replies to "Massachusettensis" were the latest and most authentic expression of his views on the colonial constitution, I refer to them again.

On the parliamentary modification of the charter contemporaneous with the Boston Port Bill, he says, "America will never allow that Parliament has any authority to alter their constitution. She is wholly penetrated with a sense of the necessity of resisting it at all hazards. And she would resist it if the constitution of Massachusetts had been altered as much for the better as it is for the worse." The inviolability of the colonial constitution, and that constitution as the basis and measure of colonial rights, was his doctrine.

This bold position was the true position. No sounder doctrine ever emanated from any American constitutionalist ; and when John Adams assumed it, defended it, and brought his colony to stand upon it and fight the war upon it, he rendered her a service of statesmanship such as has never been surpassed. It changed the nature of the contest. Acts which would have been rebellion to the British Constitution, and made all participators in them traitors, were no longer such, but justifiable and patriotic defence of their own constitutional liberty.

The Whigs were no longer fighting against Great Britain, but for the protection of their own rights. The difference was immense, and so were the consequences. This new feeling nerved the arm and fired the hearts of many whom the idea of treason inspired with something of its old terror. Every act of ministerial power designed to coerce the colonists was usurpation, and the ministerial troops became an organized mob which might be lawfully resisted.

Important as were the consequences of John Adams's doctrine of the inviolability of colonial constitutions in affording a good fighting position, other and even more important consequences flowed from it. If the people of the several colonies were living under constitutional governments of their own, and not merely royal charters revocable at the pleasure of the imperial government, it followed that they had a right to change their constitutions at will and mould them to their changed circumstances. This was what John Adams incessantly urged in the Congress of 1775, and what was as strenuously resisted by a large party not yet ripe for independence, which, they claimed, and with truth, such a measure would promote more than any other conceivable. Finally Adams prevailed; and while the war was going on, several of the colonies adopted State governments, on models furnished by him, and notably his own State, the constitution of which he drafted, and from which was adopted the frame of government in the Constitution of the United States. Fifty millions of people to-day live under a constitution the essential features of which are after his model. Thirty-eight states now have constitutions in no essential respect differing from that which he drafted. Thus widely is his influence felt. How permanently, God only knows. But until constitutional government is overthrown on this continent, the work of the GREAT CONSTITUTIONALIST will endure.

As an example of his insight and grasp of constitutional principles, may be cited his action in respect to the impeachment of the judges who accepted salaries from the crown, instead of the province, in contravention of the provincial constitution. Peter Oliver was chief justice. His brother, the stamp distributor, had been compelled to renounce his office under the Liberty Tree. But the chief justice was

understood to be of sterner stuff, and probably would have yielded his life, sooner than his office, at the dictation of the mob. The Whigs — and most of all, the Whig lawyers — were in doubt. But John Adams had no doubt. The provincial constitution, he claimed, contained the germ of every power which had been developed in the British Constitution in the centuries of its growth; and now that the exigency had arisen which called forth the latent resources of the provincial constitution, with that promptness, decision and sound judgment which always characterized his action when there was anything to call forth his powers, he proposed the impeachment of the chief justice by the House before the Council. After his professional brethren had recovered from their astonishment at the audacity of this proposal, and come more fully to understand the constitutional basis on which it rested, they fell in with the idea, and proceedings were inaugurated, which were brought to a summary end by the war, and the flight of Oliver to England, on the evacuation of Boston by the king's troops.

When John Adams was transferred from a provincial to a national stage, as one of the delegates from Massachusetts to the Continental Congress, which met at Philadelphia in September, 1774, he became associated with a body of very able men, among whom he at once assumed a leading position, as he had done in his own colony. He was by considerable the ablest man in the body, and in his line of constitutional statesmanship, by far the best equipped.

But his position was one of great difficulty. It is only after a careful study of the proceedings of this Congress, and the subsequent history of some of its members, that we come at its real character. It was a Peace Congress.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> That such was its character is evident from the final resolutions they adopted: —

Some of the colonies had been compromised by their attitude in respect to the East India Company's teas; and the extreme measures of the British government in closing the port of Boston, and altering the charter of the contumacious people of Massachusetts, excited the apprehension of other colonies as to the ulterior purposes of the ministry. While it was the patriotic desire of the Congress to express their sympathies and to stand by the people of Boston in the hour of their sufferings, it was hoped and expected that some conciliatory course would be followed which would allow the ministry and the Massachusetts people to extricate themselves from their difficulties without recourse to war.

John Adams had no faith in the efficacy of the petition to the king, nor in the addresses to the people of Great Britain and the Canadas. Matters had gone so far in New England that they would be satisfied with no terms short of the withdrawal of the royal troops, the re-opening the port of Boston, and the total repeal of all measures designed to reduce them to obedience. At the same time, not only the British ministry, but the British people also, were demanding the complete submission of the Bostonians, or the infliction of condign punishment. So far as Massachusetts was concerned, the war was inevitable. John Adams saw it to be so, and prepared himself for it.

He endeavored to prepare the Congress for it, and not without valuable results. The great work effected by this Congress was the bringing the colonies on to common ground by a declaration of their rights. Opinions were divided. A

“We have for the present only resolved to pursue the following peaceable measures: 1, to enter into a non-importation, non-consumption and non-exportation agreement or association.” 2 and 3, to address the people of Great Britain, the inhabitants of British America, and to prepare a loyal address to his Majesty.

compromise ensued, and the famous fourth article was the result. It was drawn by John Adams, and carried mainly by his influence, and reads as follows : —

"That the foundation of English liberty, and of all free government, is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council; and as the English colonists are not represented, and from their local and other circumstances cannot be properly represented in the British Parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several provincial legislatures, where their rights of representation can alone be preserved, in all cases of taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of their sovereign, in such manner as has been heretofore used and accustomed. But from the necessity of the case, and a regard to the mutual interest of both countries, we cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the British Parliament as are *bona fide* restrained to the regulation of our external commerce, for the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the mother country; and the commercial benefits of its respective members; excluding every idea of taxation, internal or external, for raising a revenue on the subjects in America, without their consent."

This was not precisely what John Adams wanted, but it was much. When this declaration went forth, the cause of Massachusetts, in whatever it might eventuate, was the cause of the colonies. IT WAS NATIONALIZED. This was John Adams's greatest feat of statesmanship. On it the success of the impending war, and the Declaration of Independence, rested.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to learn that John Adams regarded the declaration of the Congress, on the subject of parliamentary power over the Colonies, merely as the reaffirmance of the old colonial doctrine. "Thus it appears," he says in *Novanglus*, "that the ancient Massachusettensians



Congress having completed its work adjourned October 26, 1774. This body has been much commended for its moderation and ability. Chatham eulogized the remarkable series of addresses it sent forth; but neither Samuel Adams nor John Adams, nor some of the Virginians, were satisfied with the results of the Congress. As Bancroft says, "Congress did not as yet desire independence. Had that been their object they would have strained every nerve to increase their exports, and fill the country with the manufactures and munitions which they required." On the contrary they agreed upon certain commercial restrictions upon the trade of the mother country and those colonies which should side with her, hoping thereby to coerce the king's government, by the influence of the manufacturing and trading classes at home, to desist from that commercial policy which was the chief ground of their displeasure. As matter of fact, the Revolution had not cast off its commercial phase. It had, however, made one capital declaration of colonial rights.

The value of this stroke of statesmanship became apparent in the next session of Congress in May, 1775. The events at Lexington and Concord had precipitated the contest which the majority of the people of the colonies wished to avoid. But the die was cast, and one of the delegates at least had measured the magnitude of the struggle that had begun, the necessity of nationalizing it, and of bringing to its support the full powers and resources of a continental government. This sagacity and statesmanship were evinced by the com-

and Virginians had precisely the same sense of the authority of parliament, viz., that it had none at all; and the same sense of the necessity, that by the voluntary act of the colonies, their free, cheerful consent, it should be allowed the power of regulating trade; and this is precisely the idea of the late Congress at Philadelphia, expressed in the fourth proposition of their Bill of Rights." Works, iv. 112.

pleteness of his plans ; and his practical force, by his final success in carrying them into operation in spite of innumerable obstacles thrown in his way. "We ought," wrote John Adams to General Warren, July 24, "to have had in our hands, a month ago, the whole legislative, executive and judicial of the whole continent, and have completely modelled a constitution ; to have raised a naval power, and opened all our ports wide." When the intercepted letter which contained the above extract was published at Philadelphia, it "displayed him as drawing the outlines of an independent state, the great bugbear in the eyes of members who still cling to the hope that the last resort might be avoided." These views subjected him to animadversion, and even cold treatment, to the extent that he "was avoided in the streets by many, as if it were a contamination to speak with such a traitor."

We see the magnificence of his plan to create the empire which he foresaw in his youth. We see the sagacity of the measures by which it was to be accomplished. We also see, what those who opposed him were soon to see, the vast resources, the untiring labors and indomitable courage which he brought to the execution of these plans.

His plan was to sever at once every political tie which bound the separate colonies to Great Britain in their royal governments, and to lay the basis of their independence by the erection of state governments in their stead ; to nationalize these state governments by confederation, and to give this new government the substance as well as the form of nationality by adopting the army before Boston, and putting it under national commanders ; by constructing a navy ; by issuing bills of credit ; by sending ambassadors to foreign nations ; and finally, by declaring the thirteen colonies, the free, independent United States of America.

To the accomplishment of this work of building a nation, no one of all the great men with whom he was associated addressed himself with a clearer comprehension of what it involved, or more ably or more assiduously devoted himself to it, than John Adams.

This was his great work. Before its substantial completion I do not think he could have been spared. I see no one who could have filled his place between 1774 and 1777. But after that period, the Revolution in successful progress, independence declared, and the work of constitutional reconstruction well advanced, he might have retired to well-merited repose. The Congress thought otherwise; and John Adams, who always heeded the call of his country, embarked for Europe charged with diplomatic duties. He was well informed in matters of public and international law, but was not, I think, specially adapted for a diplomatic career. He rendered some excellent service, but none which might not have been as well performed by his able associates, unless we may still question whether their zeal for the preservation of the old colonial rights to the fisheries, and for extending the boundaries of the country to their furthest limits, was equal to his own. He certainly had always before his eyes the vision of his youth — the Empire of America. Not even in a later day was Webster's view wider, more national, or more patriotic; nor in the largeness and liberality of his commercial policy has he ever been surpassed by any of our public men.

Doubtless there is a tendency to over-estimation when our eyes are fixed somewhat exclusively upon a single actor in a cause which enlists the abilities of other eminent men. But I think we may safely add our own to the according voices of those patriots who were personally cognizant of the services of John Adams, in assigning to him the pre-em-

inent place among the statesmen of the Revolution. He did not bring to the Revolution so large an understanding as Franklin's. But Franklin lacked some things essential to the cause which John Adams possessed. He lacked youth. At the critical period which was forming an epoch in history, he was an old man, with great interests depending on the existing order of things, averse to extreme measures, especially war, and without special training for constitutional questions. Jay, Jefferson, Wythe, Henry, Lee, Gadsden — not to mention others — were able men, and rendered great services. But, save Franklin, no man in the colonies was so largely endowed as John Adams. His understanding was extraordinary. He planned well, and he executed his plans. There was no other man of so much weight in action as he. There were wise men — some, estimated by conventional standards, much wiser than John Adams; but none whose judgments on revolutionary affairs have proved more solid or enduring. There were younger men of genius, and older men of great experience in affairs; but John Adams was just at that period of life when genius becomes chastened by experience without being overpowered by adversity.

But whatever may have been the value of his services when compared with those of his great compatriots, it is sufficient title to lasting honor and the unceasing benedictions of his countrymen, that John Adams had a conspicuous place among those who builded a great nation, made it free, and formed governments for it which seem destined to endure for ages, and affect the political condition of no inconsiderable part of the human race.

While living, John Adams had no strong hold on the people, and at one time, as he said, an immense unpopularity, like the tower of Siloam, fell upon him; and now that he is dead, even the remembrance of his great services seems to

be growing indistinct. He probably lacked many of those qualities which attract popular favor, and those which he possessed, such as courage and steadfastness, were exhibited on no theatre of public action, but in the secret sessions of the Continental Congress. Passionate eloquence on great themes touches the heart to finer issues ; but no syllable of those powerful utterances which, as Jefferson tells us, took men off their feet, was heard beyond the walls of Independence Hall ; and even the glory of the transaction which made the old hall immortal rests upon the hand which wrote, not upon that which achieved, the great Declaration. This ought not to be altogether so. It matters little to the stout old patriot with what measure of fame he descends to remote age, for he will never wholly die ; but to us, and to those who come after us, it is of more than passing consequence that we and they withhold no tribute of just praise from those unpopular men who deserve the respectful remembrance of their countrymen.

In the public squares of the city have been erected statues of those great men, save John Adams, whose services were indispensable to the initiation and successful issue of the Revolution — Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin and George Washington ; but our eyes seek in vain for any adequate memorial of him whose life, public and private, was without blemish, whose essential character is worthy of all admiration, and whose services ought never to be forgotten so long as free, united, constitutional government holds its just place in the estimation of the people.



















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